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DREAMS OF A BETTER LIFE: ERNST BLOCH

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DREAMS OF A BETTER LIFE – RETHINKING MARXISM WITH ERNST BLOCH

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Rethinking Marxism with Ernst Bloch

Since the 1970s, a neo-liberal paralysis of political imagination has maintained a tight grip on many leftist thinkers and social activists. While the 2008 crisis once again proved capitalism's suicidal tendencies to be ineradicable, the global response to it seems to have been far from hopeful for the left. This is especially true in the wake of Brexit, Trump, Bolsonaro and Johnson, as well as many grassroot neo-fascist movements which have been steadily on the rise across Europe in the last decades. As Mark Fisher wrote, "capitalism seamlessly occupies the horizons of the thinkable" (Fisher 2013, 8). It is not coincidental that this sentence was published a year after the 2008 banking crisis, which has as yet failed to ignite a revolutionary sparkle. However, perhaps refuting, Fisher's over-fatalistic predictions to some extent, recently there has been a significant rise of feminist and ecologically oriented grassroot movements. This has undoubtedly sparked new hopes for a possibility of an alternative to the capitalist Now, however proposals for a radical change of the mode of production are still very rare. As a possibly hopeful contribution to this debate, we propose turning to the almost century-old prolific writings of Ernst Bloch and, in particular, his concept of utopia.

Ernst Bloch's oeuvre spreads over more than five decades, stretching far beyond the turbulent and heavily periodized "age of catastrophe" (1914-1945). Nevertheless, from his first book publication - *The Spirit of Utopia* (1918/23) - to the gigantic opus magnum of *The Principle of*

Hope (1954-59, written between 1938 and 1947), Bloch's focal point of interest seems to circle around one issue in particular: he guides us into thinking utopia immanently, as a Not-Yet (*Noch-nicht-Gewordene*) that is to come from within. That is, thinking utopia firstly from within the historical "Now", as encapsulated asynchronies with the capitalist order (*Heritage of our Times*, 1935). Secondly, thinking it from within the subject and the "subjective" aspect of society such as culture, art, religion (*The Spirit of Utopia*). Finally, from within real possibilities of changing society. In this last instance Bloch offers us the notion of a "concrete utopia" – one, which does not abide by the rules of *realpolitik* and yet channels a possibility of something radically different (*The Principle of Hope*).

The contemporary significance of Bloch's thought, however, can be noticed not only in how his concept of concrete utopia enriched Marxism with "warmer", more subjective elements (a supplement to "colder" socioeconomic strategies). The two most prominent ideas, which proved useful for contemporary Marxist scholarship, are his theory of non-synchronism and his analysis of fascism. For example, Bloch's idea of *Ungleichzeitigkeit* has been used to combine Marxist philosophy of history with a postcolonial perspective in Massimiliano Tomba's *Marx's Temporalities*. Tomba argues that the non-simultaneous character of capitalism is, in fact, an essential factor for the production of surplus value. According to Tomba, global capital benefits from "temporal" differences between the center and peripheries, "synchronizing" them through hegemonic socially necessary labour time (e.g. Tomba 2013, xiii). Bloch's concept of multi-temporal dialectics can therefore be employed by Marxism as a tool against the progressivist perspective of history and simplified stage-theory of development.

The theory of non-synchronism is also at the centre of Bloch's writings on fascism. In *The Heritage of Our Times* he explains in a compelling way that fascism was able to exploit the sentiments arising from contradictions between older and more modern forms of living and production. In this light, his analysis of temporal contradictions allows us to see the positive element behind every far-right project: a longing for something better. Therefore, Bloch indicates the possibilities of harnessing the irrational mythic elements at work behind fascism for the crucial conflict of labour and capital. As Anson Rabinbach puts it, Bloch "not only attempts to reveal the fertile and productive soil from which these ideas emerged, but he is concerned with them as an unclaimed radical heritage passed by the Left in its abstract critique of the illusory and 'false consciousness'" (Rabinbach 1977, 11). We want to read this

gesture as a political stance for today that does not simply view the voters of the far-right from the pedestal of liberal contempt, but instead tries to understand the mechanisms behind their decisions and reclaim their origins. The same approach was applied by Bloch - and could continue to be applied by the radical Left today – to religion and religious movements.

It is especially significant for the publication of this issue, originating in Poland, that Bloch's analysis of fascism seems to respond to the very problem found in many of the outlooks on the current rise of far right. Namely, that the contemporary diagnoses of populism as well as those of structural fascism seem to either treat this global tendency as an undifferentiated universal phenomenon, or focus on the specificity of the local context (be it Italian, German, or North American). Instead, what Bloch's non-synchronicity enables us to see are the intertwining entanglements of center-periphery relations. And while in the 1930s this was applied to Germany alone, in the times of globalized capitalism we should take Bloch's analysis a step further and view fascism in the light of world-market dependencies rather than simply nationalistic tendencies contained within the borders of various separate countries.

And while in the 1930s this was applied to Germany alone, in the times of globalized capitalism we should take Bloch's analysis a step further and view fascism in the light of world-market dependencies rather than simply nationalistic tendencies contained within the borders of various separate countries.

Moreover, we believe that reading Bloch today can address the problems associated with Marxists theories appealing to the communist aspect of what is already present. This is the case with, for example, Hardt and Negri's sublation of the difference between the capitalist temporality of the present and revolutionary, proletarian temporality oriented toward the future. In a polemical reference to Bloch's future-oriented philosophy, with its complex relation to the present, they argue for a more immediate understanding of the encapsulated utopias in the now. "Today", they write, "revolution is no longer imaginable as an event separated from us in the future but has to live in the present, an 'exceeding' present that in some sense already contains the future within it" (Hardt and Negri 2009, 242). Such an equation of Bloch's theory of hope with an image of revolution as separated from us in the future is, however, ambiguous. The orientation towards "pure immanence", which they propose against such a presentation of Bloch's ideas, can limit our imagination of emancipation to strategies, tactics and forms of life already determined by the current, capitalist mode of production. We believe that Bloch's temporality of hope for a different future offers answers to the shortcomings of the philosophy of immanence of this sort. It is his notion of the Not-Yet, associated with a concrete utopia that allows for radical hope, rather than only immanent hope. That is – hope for a revolutionary rupture in the course of history is possible due to the current

While immanent hope may pacify utopian desires by promising that the future is somehow already present, the Blochian radical hope of the Not-Yet animates them by identifying current possibilities as ways out toward the Future.

conditions, but it is by no means limited in its form to what these conditions dictate. While immanent hope may pacify utopian desires by promising that the future is somehow already present, the Blochian radical hope of the Not-Yet animates them by identifying current possibilities as ways out toward the Future.

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The texts presented in the issue adopt a mixed approach to Bloch's philosophy. Some of the authors discuss the philosophical roots of Bloch's project and point to its historical context. Cat Moir offers an insight into the biocentric inspirations behind Bloch's early writings, while Lucien Pelletier critically reconstructs Bloch's moral theory in its historical development, emphasising links with the thought of Georg Simmel and Max Scheler. Loren Goldman traces Bloch's materialism by situating the problem of the ontological grounds for revolutionary praxis in the historical context of the Aristotelian and Hegelian left, and by juxtaposing Bloch and Althusser's materialisms.

Other authors focus on locating Bloch's thought within the discussions important for the contemporary Left. Jan Rehmann argues for a praxis-oriented reading of Bloch's philosophy and offers an ecological reading od Bloch, with a fruitful comparison of Bloch's concept of anticipation and hope with Gramsci's philosophy. Dritëro Demjaha discusses Ernst Bloch's notion of 'meta-religion' and examines his reassessment of religion and Hegel's idealism, arguing that they are intrinsically linked in Bloch's thought, as two sources of Marxism similar in their limits and contributions. Federico Filauri, in his analysis of Messianic temporalities in Agamben and Bloch, shows the latter's future-oriented philosophy as the answer to the aporiae of politics based on subtraction. Felipe Catalani discusses the problem of anticipatory thinking as phantasy in its two opposing dimensions: utopian, represented by Bloch, and catastrophist, associated with Günther Anders. Sebastian Truskolaski reconstructs Bloch and Adorno's discussion on utopia and warns against the over-determination of our images of the future.

An important factor for our publication is the limited scholarship on Bloch available for the Polish reader. There is only one monograph on Bloch in Polish (Anna Czajka, "Człowiek znaczy nadzieja: o filozofii Ernesta Blocha", 1991). Bloch's main works – apart from *Spuren*, also translated by Anna Czajka – are not yet available in Polish. We hope, therefore, that this issue will serve as an impulse to start discussion on

Ernst Bloch in Polish scholarship, especially among more Marxist-oriented scholars.

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Dreams of a Better Life – Rethinking Marxism with Ernst Bloch

CAT MOIR

Biocentrism and Marxism: Bloch's Concept of Life and the *Spirit of Utopia*

This article argues that Ernst Bloch's (1885-1977) early philosophical development was profoundly influenced by a biocentric perspective that dominated European culture in the decades around the turn of the twentieth century. Biocentrism covers a range of artistic and intellectual currents united by a commitment to embodied life, the natural world, and the insights of the flourishing biological sciences. Despite the clear filiations between biocentrism and *völkisch* and fascist ideologies, as this article demonstrates, Bloch combined aspects of biocentrism with a Marxist viewpoint in an attempt to counter his political opponents—even as that meant occasionally moving in the same conceptual territory.

Keywords: Ernst Bloch, biocentrism, Marxism, fascism, biopolitics

If one concept can be said to have dominated German culture in the early decades of the twentieth century, it is "life". Life was the slogan of the youth movement and of *Jugendstil* in the arts; it was the motivating idea behind the *Lebensreform* movement that sought to transform everything from clothing and food to education and leisure time; it was the organising principle of a *Lebensphilosophie* that emphasised the meaning and value of human existence and rejected the self-sufficiency of sterile, scholastic philosophy and scientific positivism.

Amid this atmosphere of life affirmation, as Herbert Schnädelbach has put it, the "difference between what was dead and what was living came to be *the* criterion of cultural criticism" in early twentieth-century Germany (Schnädelbach 1984, 129; emphasis added). Yet this orientation towards life also had a dark side. The "cult of life" tended towards an extreme naturalisation of the human being, with its proponents justifying social inequality and positing human diversity as being the result of innate, biological differences (Lebovic 2013, 155). At the same time, there was a certain irrationalism built into this "biocentric" worldview, as it has been called, which was exploited politically in the years following the First World War by conservative revolutionaries and fascists, who saw conspiracies inscribed into the mysterious forces they believed to be at work in nature itself (Botar and Wünsche 2016).

To have any hope of combatting fascism, Bloch claimed, the left needed to wrest the discourse of life from its political enemies.

As dangerous as the fascists' political exploitation of the discourse of life may have been, for Ernst Bloch writing in 1935, it was nevertheless part of the explanation for their success. While the National Socialists were attracting supporters by speaking to people's hearts and minds, the Communists, as Bloch saw it, were losing their audience because they were talking only in numbers and figures. Yet if "the fraudulent flickering and frenzy of fascism appears only to serve big capital, which uses it to disperse or darken the view of less privileged social classes", Bloch argued that the left could use the same tactics to mobilise people for more progressive ends (Bloch 1985, 16). To have any hope of combatting fascism, Bloch claimed, the left needed to wrest the discourse of life from its political enemies.

In this article, I argue that Bloch's Marxism was underpinned by a conception of life that shared much in common with the thought of vocal critics of socialism, such as Ernst Haeckel, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Ernst Jünger, even as it differed in important respects. Tracing how Bloch mobilised the discourse of life in pursuit of a progressive utopian politics in the 1920s thus opens up new perspectives on both the history of Marxism and the broader intellectual context in which it was embedded in early twentieth-century Germany. The article offers a close con-

textualised analysis of Bloch's essay entitled "The Lower Life" from the 1923 edition of his early work *Spirit of Utopia* (Bloch 2000). It aims to show how Bloch integrated a concept of life deeply indebted to the biocentric orientation of his age into his broader, utopian Marxist framework.

Origins of Bloch's Biocentrism

Looking back on his Berlin childhood, to around 1900, Walter Benjamin reflected on the experience of his "generation that had gone to school on a horse-drawn streetcar" and "now stood under the open sky in a countryside in which nothing remained unchanged but the clouds, and beneath these clouds, in a field of force of destructive torrents and explosions, was the tiny, fragile human body" (Benjamin 1999, 732). Benjamin's memoir captures a sense of alienation under conditions of industrialised modernity in which embodied life was experienced as trapped between the age-old cyclical rhythms of nature and the novel promise and threat of technology. If such alienation was a widespread feature of turn-of-the-century German urban life, it was only heightened by the cataclysm of the First World War, which saw the destructive forces of technology unleashed on a massive scale. Despite the enormous loss of life, the war inspired awe in technology's capabilities among some artists and intellectuals (see Herf 1998). Yet it also fuelled the critique of a modern industrial society perceived to be based on a logic of instrumental reason (see Horkheimer 2012). Against this background, a certain "biocentric" perspective, which had been developing in Germany since the mid-nineteenth century, was reinvigorated in the Weimar years.

In their work on biocentrism in cultural history, Oliver Botar and Isabel Wünsche identify biocentrism with a number of discourses in turn-of-the-twentieth-century Europe that shared a commitment to "the primacy of life and life processes […] as well as an anti-anthropocentric worldview, and an implied or expressed environmentalism" (Botar and Wünsche 2016, 16). The term biocentrism thus covers a number of related intellectual and cultural phenomena—from neo-romanticism and neo-vitalism to *Lebensphilosophie*, philosophical anthropology, various forms of social and cultural evolutionism, and the continuation of a romantic naturalistic tendency within modernism. Despite their many specificities and differences, these intellectual currents were connected by three main things: the rejection of positivism, scientism, and physicalism in the study of life and society; the concomitant conviction

that knowledge should "serve life", to borrow Nietzsche's phrase; and a shared emphasis on the organic and corporeal (see Nietzsche 1997). Biocentrism was thus a broad cultural and intellectual phenomenon characterized, in Botar's words, by a "revival of aspects of Romanticism, among them an intuitive, idealistic, Holistic, even metaphysical attitude towards the idea of 'nature', of the experience of unity of all life" (Botar and Wünsche 2016, 16). It was directed, as Schnädelbach argues, against "a civilization which had become intellectualistic and antilife, against a culture which was shackled by convention and hostile to life, and for a new sense of life" that emphasised authenticity, culture, and youth (Schnädelbach 1984, 139).

Yet if biocentrism was in part directed against a reductive natural scientific view of life, it is nevertheless not the case that the term "life" in this context did "not refer to anything primarily biological" (Schnädelbach, 1984, 139). The emergence of biology as an independent scientific discipline and its enormous advances during the nineteenth century had a major impact on the broader cultural understanding of "life" and, as Botar and Wünsche point out, biocentric perspectives were united by the perception of biology as "the paradigmatic science of the age" (Botar and Wünsche 2016, 16). This is particularly evident in the pervasive rise of evolutionary thinking, which gradually supplanted traditional religious explanations of life's diversity and development. In the German context, the modern life sciences incorporated older, romantic ways of looking at nature. In the early years of the twentieth century, Darwinian ideas of the struggle for life and the survival of the fittest were combined with romantic and vitalist ideas in a biocentric worldview that spanned science, philosophy, and the arts.

His political demand for the emancipation of nature has profoundly environmentalist implications, and although Bloch's thinking could hardly be described as anti-anthropocentric, his utopian Marxist vision of the humanisation of nature is counterbalanced by the impulse to naturalise the human.

Bloch's philosophy displays many of the hallmarks of biocentrism as defined by Botar and Wünsche. In the early phase of his career, Bloch was deeply influenced by Nietzsche's philosophy of the will to life, and by the naturalistic aesthetics of the expressionist movement (see Moir 2019). Both his language and his metaphysics, underpinned by the concept of a self-realising and limiting material nature, are pervaded by organicism (see Moir 2020). His political demand for the emancipation of nature has profoundly environmentalist implications, and although Bloch's thinking could hardly be described as anti-anthropocentric, his utopian Marxist vision of the humanisation of nature is counterbalanced by the impulse to naturalise the human. The fundamental features of the biocentric worldview thus pervade Bloch's thinking from the outset.

By the time Bloch published the first edition of *Spirit of Utopia* in 1918, the idea that philosophy should privilege not just the concept of

life, but life itself was firmly established. Writing in 1910, the *Lebensphilosoph* Wilhelm Dilthey had argued that "[l]ife is the foundation that must be philosophy's starting point. It is that which is known from the inside, the horizon beyond which we cannot go" (Dilthey 1992). That *Spirit of Utopia* shares this *lebensphilosophische* orientation is clear from the book's opening "Intention", written already in 1918:

> I am. We are. / That is enough. Now we have to begin. Life has been put into our hands. For itself it became empty already long ago. It pitches senselessly back and forth, but we stand firm, and so we want to be its initiative [Faust] and we want to be its ends [Ziel]. (Bloch 2020)

In the context of the end of the First World War, the subject position with which Bloch begins here speaks to those who remain after having survived the conflict. It is into their hands that life has been put after the senseless deaths of so many millions of others. At the same time, however, Bloch inaugurates a compositional technique here that will come to characterise almost all his texts, which begin from the existentialist standpoint of an embodied life—Dilthey's horizon—understood as both individual and shared.

The orientation on embodied life is emphasised through the reference to "hands" and "fists", and to "standing firm" amid a living flux that "pitches senselessly back and forth". Yet the resonances of labour and resistance that these images also conjure up demonstrates that Bloch's focus on life is intended to serve what Wayne Hudson has called his "activist metaphysics" (Hudson 1982, 86). Like many of his contemporaries in the wake of the First World War, Bloch was clearly calling for the spiritual and cultural renewal, not only of German society, but of all humanity. The oblique reference to Goethe's *Faust*, who yearned to make the perfect moment last forever, already gives some indication of the cosmic dimensions of the task at hand, as Bloch saw it.[1] Yet his injunction "Now we have to begin" was above all a call to social and political action.

Though Bloch's earlier writings, particularly his journalism during the First World War, had been marked by a stylistic flair (see Bloch

1 In Scene 7 of *Faust* Part I, Faust, having agreed with Mephistopheles that he will serve the Devil in hell after death in exchange for Mephistopheles granting his every wish on earth, Faust says that if he is pleased enough with anything Mephistopheles gives him in this life that he wishes to stay in that moment forever, he will say "Verweile doch, du bist so schön" (stay awhile, you are so beautiful), and die in that moment.

1985), here for the first time we get a sense of his fully-fledged modernist style. Botar and Wünsche point to biocentrism as "a constituent element of modernism" in literature and the arts, and there is no doubt that the two are combined in *Spirit of Utopia*, which is written in Bloch's trademark expressionist idiom.

The expressionists' use of art and literature to convey a sense of cosmic unity was a neo-romantic response to a Kantian epistemology that emphasised the *distinction* between human beings and the rest of nature. Kant's insight that human beings can never know the world as it is in itself may have given rise to precisely the kind of metaphysical dualism that the German romantics challenged, but they did not abandon the insight (see Kant 1998).[2] Indeed, that is precisely why romantics such as Friedrich Schlegel claimed that conventional philosophy, which treated thought and language as capable of transparently representing the real, could never truly access the "highest" totality of humanity and nature (Schlegel 1958, 124). Philosophy, Schlegel argued, must become ironic in order to convey this sense of wholeness while nevertheless recognising the limited scope of knowledge within it. Nature's generative—its poetic—power would always exceed our grasp, the romantics believed, but given that we too are part of an auto-poetic life process, the best way for philosophy to convey this unity was for it to become poetic. Bloch's fusion of biocentrism and expressionist modernism thus, like expressionism itself, owed a significant debt to romanticism in both thematic and stylistic terms.

Against this background, it is clear that concept of life was at the heart of Bloch's *Spirit of Utopia* from the very beginning, with its poetic mode of philosophising and its emphasis on embodied life as philosophy's privileged starting point. Bloch takes up the concept more explicitly, however, in the short essay "The Lower Life" ["*Das untere Leben*"], which first appeared in the 1923 edition, in the book's final section entitled "Karl Marx, Death, and the Apocalypse". It is the only substantial addition to this final section, inserted before "The Socialist Idea" and incorporating a reformulated version of the short opening vignette that preceded the latter in the 1918 edition (see Bloch 1971). The essay thus occupies a significant position between the preceding chapter on "The Shape of the Inconstruable Question", which ends with a meditation on the relationship between self-knowledge and the knowledge of nature, and Bloch's reflections on socialism which follow.

2 Nietzsche of course pushed it even further with his perspectivalism, which he blends exemplarily with a critical biocentrism in the opening aphorism of "On Truth and Lies in a Nonmoral Sense" (Nietzsche 1990).

The subtitle of the book's final section – "the ways in which the inward can become outward and the outward like the inward" – positions the discussion of embodied life between epistemology and social and political action (Bloch 2000, 231). Here, Bloch alludes to the romantic Novalis, for whom the "secret path" to knowledge of the cosmos led "inward" via the "depths of our spirit" (Novalis 1996, 103). If Bloch's conception of life was also one in which "eternity with its worlds / past and future" would be found "in us or nowhere", once the principle of unity of all things has been discovered within, he believed it must be externalised, made real at the social level (Bloch 2000, 235). Bloch believed that Marx and Marxists neglected the inner, spiritual dimensions of life at their peril (Bloch 2000, 243-245). However, the purpose of looking inward was for him always in order to realise the dream of a thing that Marx claimed the world itself has long possessed (see Marx 1975a).

The Romantic Conception of Life

Bloch shared with the "romantic conception of life" a holistic vision of nature in which humans and other living beings are part of a single continuum (Richards 2010). If with the emergence of human beings "what lies beneath us opens up for the first time", Bloch nevertheless simultaneously insists that we "are also inside" that lower life (Bloch 2000, 233). His reflections on the somatism of our embodied existence – "This is how one moves, and we too fall asleep" (Bloch 2000, 233) – briefly call to mind the mechanical materialism of a Carl Vogt or a Ludwig Büchner, for whom all life, including consciousness and thought, could ultimately be explained in mechanical-physiological terms.[3] When Vogt, following the eighteenth-century French materialist Cabanis, wrote that thoughts are to the brain what urine is to the kidneys, he reduced thought to a mere somatic reflex of our material being (Vogt 1847, 206; Cabanis 1844, 137f).

Yet Bloch's conception of life is deeply anti-mechanistic. Instead, it is imbued with the kind of neo-vitalism that was central to the biocentric perspective. In the German-speaking world, Romantic scientists such as Goethe, Kielmeyer, and Oken treated biological processes as teleologically determined by some sort of immaterial vital force driving the process. Bloch similarly describes evolution as an experimental process driven—or rather pulled—by an invisible natural force seeking to externalise something internal, oriented on an ultimate, but still unk-

3 For more on mechanical materialism, see Gregory 1977.

nown, goal. In this context, species formation takes place "[t]entatively, and led by a strange presentiment, not yet implanted", by means of a "testing, retaining, rejecting, reusing, erring, reverting, succeeding" (Bloch 2000, 234). The "impulse" to push towards the "brightness", and out of the darkness that "larves" beneath, implies a Schellingian subject of nature with which our own subjectivity is connected in what Bloch calls the "darkness of the lived moment" (Bloch 2000, 234)[4].

Though Bloch does not cite Darwin directly here, this utopian theory of evolution clearly implies a critique of Darwin's theory of evolution by adaptation. Though he concedes that individual creatures might "accommodate to the flora or move exactly to the rhythm that their structure, and the environment to which their structure is attuned, dictates", Bloch sees more than merely adaptation at work in the "struggle for skeleton and brain" (Bloch 2000, 233-234). "[N]ot even hares", he writes, "could arise through mere adaptation to the environment, to say nothing of lions, if it were merely impressions of the milieu that assembled, and not potential victors over them" (Bloch 2000, 233). In other words, Bloch saw evolution as much in terms of a triumph of the individual over external circumstances as of adaptation to those circumstances.

Bloch's remarks here recall those of Nietzsche in his posthumous fragments when he writes that the "influence of 'external circumstances' is exaggerated by D[arwin] to a ridiculous extent: the essential thing in the vital process is precisely the tremendous shaping force which creates forms from within and which utilizes, exploits the 'external circumstances'" (Nietzsche 1988, 7 [25])[5]. Bloch's early Nietzscheanism shows through strongly in his discussion of life and evolution, with some interesting parallels and divergences. As Gregory Moore has argued, the "focal point of Nietzsche's evolutionary thought" was "not the group, but rather the solitary organism" (Moore 2006, 519). For Nietzsche, though extraordinary individuals may evolve, they leave no trace on the type because their existence is precarious. As such, Nietzsche sees evolution at the species level as a race to the bottom.

Like many of his contemporaries, Nietzsche had never actually read Darwin, and his "Darwinism" is in fact a "blend of Darwinian rhetoric […] with attitudes that are in reality a legacy of the pre-Darwinian view of nature" (Moore 2006, 519). The same can be said for Bloch, who never refers directly to Darwin in *Spirit of Utopia*, but, like Nietzsche,

4 For more on Schelling's influence on Bloch's ontology, see Moir 2018.

5 Hereinafter Journal of Nietzsche Studies citation style: *KSA* 12: 7[25].

is at some level committed to a pre-Darwinian theory of evolution, inherited from romantic nature philosophy, which understood it as a gradual, developmental unfolding. This idea of a naturally progressive evolution was easily allied with a teleological narrative of evolution that remained compatible with the religious creation story, by implying that human beings are the necessary outcome of the process.

Perhaps because of his stronger emphasis on the individual organism, Nietzsche remained closer to Darwinism in resisting a teleological explanation of human development. Nietzsche's view that humans did not "represent any significant advance over other species or organisms" stands in contrast to that of Bloch, for whom "every organism first became on the way to human form" (Moore 2006, 524; Bloch 2000, 233). To be sure, Bloch's description of humankind as the "characteristically uncompleted being" points to the Nietzschean idea of humans themselves as something that is to be "overcome", whether evolutionarily or through our own self-remaking (Bloch 2000, 234; Nietzsche 1967, 358). Nevertheless, Bloch's residual commitment to teleology in his account of evolution does distinguish him from the later Nietzsche who eventually seems to have disavowed it explicitly.

If Nietzsche eschewed teleology, however, he nevertheless remained committed to a broadly progressive account of evolution. Even the later Nietzsche envisaged the organic sphere in orthogenetic terms as still rising "to yet higher levels" (Nietzsche 1967, 358). Darwin, however, rejected the theory of orthogenesis, according to which evolution is inherently progressive, tending towards more complex forms. Instead, he argued that the outcome of development was not pre-given but was contingent upon the more probable reproduction of those specific individuals better adapted to their environment. Many of Darwin's German advocates, however, adopted his ideas without abandoning earlier, non-adaptive theories of evolution. Chief among them was Ernst Haeckel, who supported the idea of orthogenesis, seeing in evolution the progression towards ever more "perfect" forms (Haeckel 1924, 10; see also Haeckel 1868, 247ff).[6]

Haeckel was a scientist, but he integrated his scientific views into a monistic philosophical vision that saw the entire universe as "a single substance […], which is both god and nature at once". From this perspective, "body and spirit (or matter and energy)" were "inseparably

6 For more on the significance of Heinrich Georg Bronn's translation of Darwin's term "preferred" as "completion" in the early German editions of the *Origin*, see Gliboff 2008, 138.

connected" (Haeckel 1908, 13). Although Haeckel was Darwin's leading advocate in Germany, his monism nevertheless clearly went beyond anything Darwin had intended with his theory of evolution, as his commitment to orthogenesis demonstrates. Haeckel saw evidence for orthogenesis not only in the historical evolution of species, but also in embryonic development. According to his recapitulation theory, the ontogeny of an individual embryo—its development from fertilization through gestation to hatching or birth—undergoes various stages that represent moments of the evolutionary history (phylogeny) of the species. Controversial at the time, Haeckel's recapitulation theory and the idea of orthogenesis that underpinned it were eventually debunked as Darwin's theory was gradually incorporated from the 1890s onwards into what would become known as the modern synthesis of evolutionary and genetic theory (see Hopwood 2015).

Like Darwin, Haeckel is never mentioned in *Spirit of Utopia*, though Bloch would later comment critically on his work. Nevertheless, given Haeckel's widespread fame and popularity in early twentieth-century Germany, including among the German Marxists, it seems likely that Bloch would already have been familiar with his work at this time.[7] Whatever the case, Bloch's utopian theory of evolution as he articulates it in "The Lower Life" is clearly orthogenetic in character. When he writes that there is a "free, open, human-seeking quality in the progression from algae to fern to conifer to deciduous tree, in the migration from water into the air, or certainly in the strange delarvation of worm as reptile as bird as mammal", Bloch is expressing the idea of teleological progress built into evolution (Bloch 2000, 233-234). Moreover, his remark that "We too were embryonic, became plants and animals", not "as though we had only evolved out of plants and animals, but had not been there before, within" (Bloch 2000, 233) is strongly resonant of the idea of recapitulation.

Haeckel's commitment to orthogenesis was connected to the fact that he framed human evolution within his broader monist ontology, which strongly stressed the unity of all life and the continuum between humans and other creatures. Like many of his contemporaries, Haeckel realised it was "entirely possible" to draw conclusions about human society, culture, and politics from a theory that effectively put human beings on a spectrum with all other living creatures. For Haeckel, the political framework that followed from the Darwinian theory of the

7 For more on the socialist and social democratic reception of Haeckel, see Weber 1991.

"survival of the fittest" could only be "an aristocratic one, by no means democratic, and least of all socialist" (Haeckel 1878, 73). Moreover, hierarchical ideas fed into right-wing discourse where they underpinned arguments for social Darwinism and racial pseudo-science.[8] If a threshold was to be sought between humans and animals, Haeckel argued it should be located "between the most highly developed cultural peoples and the roughest natural peoples, uniting the latter with animals" (Haeckel 1868, 655). As we can see, it was just a short step from Haeckel's strong emphasis on the progressive development of human culture to arguing that some human "races" were more advanced than others, and to finding "biological" justifications for the "right of the strong" (Bayertz 1998, 244-246).

Bloch departs from Haeckelian thinking in drawing a much stronger distinction between human beings and other creatures. While non-human creatures remain "within the persistent constraints of the genus", humans have "exceeded the fixed genus for so long among the animals" (Bloch 2000, 234). The way in which Bloch argues that human beings have broken out of the constraining force of the genus is via the emergence of a technologized labour capable of transforming the environment. It was under the "pain of destruction" of the biological genus that man "became the tool-making…animal", Bloch argues (Bloch 2000, 234). His remark that the "pulse of life beats" truly only "after the leap toward the only creature that changes has succeeded through work above all" (Bloch 2000, 234) is double-edged: not only does it belie Bloch's underlying "left Aristotelianism"[9] with the implication that nature itself "works" in some sense; it also suggests that work qua labour is a crucial and distinguishing factor in human evolution.

The Labour of Evolution

Friedrich Engels expressed this idea quite explicitly in his essay "The Part Played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man", first published in 1896 in *Die Neue Zeit* (Engels 1987). There, Engels argues that labour, which "begins with the making of tools", was a key component of human evolution with our morphology, intellect, and specific form of sociality all stemming from the initial adaptation of bipedalism, which

8 For Haeckel's influence on National Socialism, see Gasman 2017 (1971). For a contrasting view, see Richards, 2007.

9 For more on Bloch's conception of the "Aristotelian Left", see Loren Goldmann's introduction to Bloch 2018.

Engels argues first freed of our hands for intensified tool use (Engels 1987, 457). Though the allusion to Engels, like those to Nietzsche, Darwin, and Haeckel, remains implicit here, the parallels between Bloch's view of the role of labour and technology in distinguishing the human being and Engels' are striking. While Engels acknowledges the existence of consciousness and planning behaviour in a range of animals, he nevertheless insists that the "further removed men are from animals, […] the more their effect on nature assumes the character of premeditated, planned action directed towards definite preconceived ends" (Engels 1987, 459). So too for Bloch, human beings can no longer "get by with inborn reflexes", the "earlier signals" of the animals (Bloch 2000, 234). With time, mankind "becomes only more dependent on deliberate planning, in the building of nests and related activities" (Bloch 2000, 234). Like Bloch, Engels recognises that in nature, "nothing takes place in isolation", and that animals, too, work on their environment (Engels 1987, 459). However, while at one level this may be seen as a difference in degree, both Engels and Bloch assume that at a certain point, quantitative difference is dialectically transformed into qualitative difference, or difference in kind. As Bloch puts it, human beings "initiate with their new standpoint and viewpoint by starting to make history" through labour and the use of technology (Bloch 2000, 234).

If Bloch's teleological view of human evolution distinguished him from that of both Darwin and the later Nietzsche, he nevertheless drew the same conclusion as Nietzsche in the face of what the latter called the "horrible consequence" of evolutionary theory: namely, the death of God and the concomitant realisation that life's meaning and value are not pre-given (Nietzsche 1988, 19[132]). While Haeckel and other social Darwinists believed that the laws of nature could fill the vacuum left by the decline of traditional religion in providing values to live by, for Bloch as for Nietzsche, only human beings were capable of giving life meaning and value.

Bloch's remark in "The Lower Life" that human beings did not appear "fortuitously" (Bloch 2000, 233) is thus not only an avowal of an orthogenetic concept of evolution. When at the start of the essay Bloch repeats the idea, introduced in the "Intention", that it is into "our hands [that] life has been given", it is not just to the hands of a generation that survived war that he refers, but to human hands as such. We human beings have a task, according to Bloch, which is first and foremost social and political. Giving life true meaning involves the "dissolution of capitalist society", as Bloch puts it in the following essay on "The Socialist Idea" (Bloch 2000, 240). Yet the task that Bloch sees set for humans

here is more than merely the abolition of class society—as if that were not enough. It is nothing less than what the young Marx described as the naturalisation of man, and the humanisation of nature, in other words, the emancipation of nature itself (Bloch 2000, 240). All of our "lower relatives", Bloch argues, from the "topsoil" and "plants" to the "worms, the tame as well as the wild creatures" all now "pass us by expectantly" waiting for us to free them too from their "constrained" life, to set free what is still "encircled" in them and has "not yet come out" through the process of evolution alone (Bloch 2000, 234). Of course, this is a task of messianic proportions, of which only the human being as the "latest and yet the firstborn creature", the alpha and the omega, is capable according to Bloch (Bloch 2000, 234).

Bloch was always more willing than either Nietzsche or Marx to ascribe a positive role to religion in the creation of meaning and value. The later Bloch will make it clear that he saw the very idea of the death of God that was precipitated by the rise of evolutionism as already coded in the Christian idea of Christ's forsakenness (see Bloch 2009). At this early stage, however, his recourse to religious motifs was part of his strategy to avert the resurgence of the German right. Already in 1923 Bloch argues that Marx had over-emphasised the economically "outward" at the expense of those "inward" factors that move people (Bloch 2000, 242-243). As fascism was growing, Bloch insisted on the need for the left to "make room for life" in order to stem its tide (Bloch 2000, 245).

What this meant in practice was occupying some of the same discursive terrain as one's opponents, a controversial strategy then as now, but one that Bloch carries out convincingly in *Spirit of Utopia*. Bloch's recourse to a romantic view of nature and his insistence on the importance of "heritage" intersects thematically with the political aesthetics of the *völkisch* movement, whose romantic anti-capitalism was primarily articulated via an anti-modern avowal of an imagined pastoral past. Bloch explicitly criticises this "romanticism of the latest reaction" as "coarse and backward" [Bloch 2000, 236]), but his writing also performs this idea.[10] "The Lower Life" begins "So am I. So are we still", subtly varying the opening lines of the "Intention" (Bloch 2000, 233). This repetition that is not quite a repetition signals Bloch's recognition that what takes place at another moment in time can never be exactly the same as what has gone before. By returning to the theme of "life" with which the book began, Bloch is suggesting that in order to change society in the after-

Bloch's recourse to a romantic view of nature and his insistence on the importance of "heritage" intersects thematically with the political aesthetics of the *völkisch* movement, whose romantic anti-capitalism was primarily articulated via an anti-modern avowal of an imagined pastoral past.

10 For more on the ideology of the *völkisch* movement, see Puschner, Schmitz and Ulbricht 1999; Mosse 1964; Stern 1961.

math of bloody catastrophe, we must "absolutely go back"—back to nature, to what connects us with the rest of the natural world (Bloch 2000, 233). *Völkisch* thinkers, too, traded in the idea of restoring a former, putatively lost, more "natural" state, usually imagined in terms of the racial or cultural purity of the nation. When Bloch argues that whoever goes back must also necessarily "be there anew", he acknowledges not only that the literal return is technically impossible, but also that the past as imagined by *völkisch* thinkers never really existed (Bloch 2000, 233).

Bloch's combination of a romantic naturalist perspective with an affirmative attitude towards technology brings him into closer proximity, perhaps, with what Jeffrey Herf has called "reactionary modernism", another conservative revolutionary movement alongside the *völkisch* nationalists, with strong ideological and genealogical ties to fascism (Herf 1998). Unlike the *völkisch* movement, reactionary modernists and fascists combined what Thomas Mann called an "affirmative stance toward progress" with "dreams of the past" in a "highly technological romanticism" (as cited in Herf 1998, 14). Thinkers such as Ernst Jünger embraced technology as stemming from the same natural drive that produces organic forms and called for a total fusion of the bio- and techno-spheres. Though not a Nazi, Jünger was a strident nationalist and veteran of the First World War, and like many during the Weimar years was in favour of technologized warfare between industrialised nations, which he saw in Darwinian terms as a cultural outgrowth of natural tendencies towards conflict and competition. Jünger's biotechnical romanticism was partly based on the fact that, as he saw it, the "martial side of technology's Janus face" could not be adequately grasped from the perspective of Enlightenment reason (Jünger 1932, 171-2).

Yet whereas Jünger saw the logic of technology as inherently anti-democratic, and the increasing technologisation of the lifeworld preferentially aligned with a hierarchical society and authoritarian form of government, Bloch envisaged the "inevitable emancipation by technology" in terms of the "abolition of poverty and the emancipation, compelled by the revolutionary proletariat, from all questions of economics".

When Bloch writes in "The Lower Life" that the "tool-making" behaviour so distinctive of human beings is "absolutely artificial, and yet right on the front", he is undoubtedly moving in the same discursive territory as Jünger, right down to the martial metaphor (Bloch 2000, 234). Yet whereas Jünger saw the logic of technology as inherently anti-democratic, and the increasing technologisation of the lifeworld preferentially aligned with a hierarchical society and authoritarian form of government, Bloch envisaged the "inevitable emancipation by technology" in terms of the "abolition of poverty and the emancipation, compelled by the revolutionary proletariat, from all questions of economics" (Bloch 2000, 267). For Jünger, labour was "an expression of national life and the worker one of the parts of the nation" (cited in Herf 1998, 90). In this mechanistic vision of the social body, war transforms labour

into a moral deed in the service of the nation. The vitalistic perspective Bloch develops in *Spirit of Utopia*, meanwhile, was directed against militarism and nationalism, which Bloch saw as anti-life in their atavistic tendencies. Unlike that of Jünger, Nietzsche, or Haeckel, Bloch's biocentrism was resolutely Marxist in orientation. Nevertheless, as "The Lower Life" makes clear, in order for Marxism to truly realize philosophy, Bloch believed it had to become a philosophy of and for life.

Conclusion: Marxism and Biopolitics

The biocentric perspective that pervaded European thought and culture in the decades around the turn of the twentieth century was double-edged. The preeminent cultural and intellectual orientation on life fulfilled a subversive function that sought to resist alienation in the modern, administered world. From this perspective, biocentrism meant putting the plenitude and generativity of life itself at the service of artistic creation and social improvement, and, conversely, making knowledge and culture "serve" life, as Nietzsche put it. The remarkable advances of biology promised to put all the power of organic nature at human fingertips. Yet life cannot be understood without death, and biocentrism also influenced fascism and adjacent perspectives that prioritised a crude biological reductionism predicated in the social and political sphere on preserving the right of the strong.

In its ambiguity, biocentrism as a cultural and intellectual phenomenon can be seen to participate in the broader development of a biopolitical regime as described by Michel Foucault, the principle of which is to govern by fostering or disallowing life (Foucault 1990, 138). Giorgio Agamben has argued that fascism was the culmination of this principle, while others such as Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Roberto Esposito, and more recently Catherine Malabou have sought to harness a biocentric perspective for more egalitarian purposes (Agamben 1998; Hardt and Negri 2005; Esposito 2008 and 2011; Malabou 2016). It is beyond the scope of this paper to explore the ways in which Bloch's Marxist biopolitics intersects systematically with these approaches. Nevertheless, from a historical perspective his example demonstrates that, contemporaneous with the rise of fascism, there were attempts to put biocentrism in the service of an emancipatory politics.

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Autor: Cat Moir
Tytuł: Biocentryzm i marksizm: Blochowska koncepcja życia i *Duch Utopii*
Abstrakt: Tekst dowodzi, że wczesny rozwój filozoficzny Ernsta Blocha (1885-1997) był znacząco zainspirowany biocentryczną perspektywą, która zdominowała kulturę europejską na przełomie wieków. Pojęcie biocentryzmu obejmuje szeroki zakres zarówno artystycznych, jak i intelektualnych nurtów, które jednoczy zainteresowanie wcielonym życiem, światem naturalnym, a także myślą rozkwitających nauk biologicznych. Pomimo jasnego pokrewieństwa pomiędzy biocentryzmem i volkistycznymi, a także faszystowskimi ideologiami – jak pokazuję – myśl Blocha łączy w sobie pewne aspekty biocentryzmu z marksistowską perspektywą, próbując zmierzyć się ze swoimi politycznymi oponentami, nawet jeśli czasami oznacza to poruszanie się po tym samym terytorium pojęciowym.
Słowa kluczowe: Ernst Bloch, biocentryzm, marksizm, faszyzm, biopolityka

LUCIEN PELLETIER

On Ernst Bloch's Moral Theory

This article describes the origin of Bloch's moral theory, which was formulated partly as a response to Simmel's moral relativism. It also shows that Bloch's theory is a coherent example of what Charles Taylor calls "expressivism," a contemporary philosophical attitude which emphasizes the creation of values, with its transgressive character. Finally, the article addresses some shortcomings of Bloch's expressivist moral theory, and emphasizes the necessity this author felt to complete it with norms ensuring human dignity.

Keywords: Ernst Bloch, Moral theory, Expressivism, Georg Simmel, Max Scheler

In chapters 43-50 of *The Principle of Hope*, Ernst Bloch elaborates a moral theory that has barely been noticed so far, although it contains several elements that may still be of significance today. The lack of interest for these views is not an unusual situation: the readers who, considering Bloch's reputation, expect from him a fully fledged Marxist philosophy, are certainly not disappointed by this author's resolute commitment to socialism and by his vehement calls to revolutionary praxis; but in many other respects, Bloch's texts expose readers to a metaphysical system that is most often rooted in quite another ground than the Marxist doctrine, and whose conceptual apparatus may therefore leave them disoriented. Insistent readers realize sooner or later that only a better understanding of Bloch's conceptual strategies and an awareness of their whys and wherefores can overcome such perplexity.

This is the kind of reading that the following pages would like to propose, focusing more specifically on Bloch's views on moral theory, which are both crucial and problematic in his philosophy. First, I will present the origin of these views in the young Bloch; his sources are more apparent in the early texts, but they maintain their influence in Bloch's mature works, including *The Principle of Hope*. Secondly, on the basis of this historical analysis, I will argue for the contemporary relevance of Bloch's moral theory by connecting it with a cultural paradigm that is prevalent today, which Charles Taylor has aptly called "expressivism." Finally, I will discuss some problems related to Bloch's own version of the expressivist moral theory.

1. The Sources of Bloch's moral theory

Bloch's very early philosophical endeavour can be considered as an attempt to overcome metaphysical pessimism, as this outlook had been formulated by Schopenhauer and his disciple Eduard von Hartmann.[1] These two authors viewed the world as a metaphysical Will that cannot be satisfied. For Schopenhauer, this Will corresponds to Kant's "thing in itself," which lies beyond our limited representations and can be known primarily not through our understanding but through the experience we have of our own corporality. Hartmann shared Schopenhau-

1 The views presented here are based on an investigation that I have conducted about the formation of Bloch's early philosophy. Various aspects of this investigation have been presented in the critical edition and translation in French that I made of Bloch's dissertation (Bloch 2010), and in subsequent articles. I have synthesized many of these results in (Pelletier 2015).

er's pessimism but differed from him with regard to the dualism of Will and understanding: he viewed the world as a process by which the Will realizes progressively, through nature and through human understanding and history, its own insatiable character and the vanity of eudemonistic desires, and therefore he saw asceticism and self-renunciation as the goals to be pursued. Hartmann believed that his processual metaphysics reconciled Schopenhauer with Hegel, and he held that the late Schelling, in spite of his Christian optimism, had formally realized that synthesis. To Hartmann, the philosophers Hegel, Schelling and Schopenhauer formed "the philosophical three-star-constellation of the 19th century" (Hartmann 1876).

In many ways, this corresponds with Bloch's views, except that Bloch attempted to subvert Hartmann's pessimism by reformulating his metaphysics into the philosophy of a possible salvation. To that aim he had recourse both to Nietzsche and to Meister Eckhart. From "Nietzsche's impulse" (Bloch 1923, 108) he adopted the affirmation of life as the source of values that should inspire us. From Eckhart's mysticism he took the idea of God's birth in the human soul, and he reformulated it in non-theistic terms, through the phenomenological descriptions of inner experience which he found in authors such as William James, Theodor Lipps and Oswald Külpe; as well as through Hermann Cohen's "principle of origin."

The synthesis of all these conceptions, which was made in 1907, was preceded by an intense search for metaphysical optimism, as is apparent in Bloch's first two articles, "Thoughts on Religious Things" (Bloch 1992) and "On the Problem of Nietzsche" (Bloch 1983), originally published in 1905 and 1906. The outcome of this search was the notion of the "obscurity of the lived moment," which plays a key role throughout Bloch's work: according to this view, we exist in the present instant, but this instant can never be known as such, we grasp it only once it is past. The evanescence and mystery of being that is thereby experienced in the instant, is lived by us as an obscurity, something negative, that determines a process whereby being as Will reaffirms itself and tends toward a future instant of self-possession, which Christian mysticism calls *nunc stans*, i.e. a moment that would not pass anymore, or a *Sein wie Utopie* (being like utopia). These ideas are foundational for Bloch and he reaffirms them insistently at all stages of his work.

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This also holds true for Bloch as a Marxist. He sees history as a collective process of self-clarification and self-determination; hence his insistence, already in his first book *Spirit of Utopia*, on the fact that the I-problem is actually a We-problem, and his celebration of Marx as the

thinker of socialism, i.e. of a society based on the postulate of human dignity and on the collaboration of subjects in the organization of their material life and in the common search for the ultimate meaning of their existence. To him, the historical importance of Marxism resides in the fact that its concrete socio-economical analyses make possible a better awareness of the tendencies of the present and hence allow the right tactical decisions for the realization of an ethical socialism. The accentuation, under the impact of Lukacs' book *History and Class Consciousness* (1923), of his use of Marxist conceptuality, and his emphasis in his later work on the necessity to think utopia concretely, were never seen by Bloch as a rejection of his earlier metaphysical doctrine. On the contrary, he believed that he had managed to formulate the right ontology, the world view that was needed by Marxism and to which it actually pertained.

Throughout his work, Bloch distinguishes two steps on the way to the Marxist utopia. The first one is the revolutionary step toward socialism, i.e. the abolition of private property and the reorganization of society toward justice and the satisfaction of everyone's material needs. However, as necessary as this step is, in *Spirit of Utopia* Bloch considers it to be a "socialism of the non-essential," and he sees the socialist State just as an "organization of the non-essential" (Bloch 1918, 301, 402), because the general satisfaction of physical needs is just the precondition for a second step, which is intellectually and socially more demanding: the collective search for the meaning of existence. In his book of 1921 on Thomas Münzer, Bloch quotes the following lines, in which his hero expresses his support for the revolt of the German peasants against the feudal lords: "As long as they reign over you, it is not possible to tell you anything about God" (Bloch 1962a, 69). Through this quote, Bloch shows clearly what the utopian purpose of social revolution must be. In *Spirit of Utopia*, he writes about a "political mysticism" according to which the socialist State would become something like a church, a "bearer of long-term goals" (Bloch 1918, 411; see also 404, and the translation: Bloch 2000, 246). This idea is repeated explicitly later, in Bloch's Marxist work, most strongly in the last chapter of *The Heritage of our Times* (1934) (Bloch 1991, 369-372), and again in the concluding chapter of *Natural Law and Human Dignity* (1961), which states: "It is one thing when the power church, the church of superstitions, passes away, and it is something different when a power-free force is on guard and stands guard in teaching conscience the 'where to' and 'what for'" (Bloch 1986, 277). In his youth, Bloch thought that the new socialist church would be guided by "the authority of a spiritual aristocracy" (Bloch 1918, 410).

In a text from 1921, "On the Moral and the Spiritual Guide, or the Double Mode of the Human Face" (Bloch 1969, 204-210), Bloch declares that this aristocracy would guide in an original way, inspired both by love and by the creation of new moral values. Bloch never gave up these views. In *The Principle of Hope*, he emphasizes the role of geniuses, who have the power to anticipate the not-yet, and he celebrates both "revolution and genius" (Bloch 1995, 132) as creative forces that must work hand in hand.[2]

These views are directly related to Bloch's moral theory. Long before *The Principle of Hope*, moral theory had been a concern for Bloch. Even before 1907, we see him confronted with a moral antinomy that had been formulated by Georg Simmel in his critical reading of Nietzsche. Simmel presents this antinomy in various interrelated forms.[3] The first form opposes Nietzsche's aristocratic morality to the ethics of goodness and altruism, such as that exemplified by Christianity. Simmel claimed that each of these moralities, while incompatible with the other, has its legitimacy. A second form opposes the Dionysian to the Apollinian. As is well known, one of Nietzsche's achievements was to give the Dionysian a moral legitimacy. The Dionysian represents the life principle, the affirmation of desire and pleasure, the demonic, as opposed to the Apollinian principle of reason and measure, labour and culture. The third form opposes freedom to equality. Simmel presents this opposition as follows: on the one hand, promoting individual freedom leads to inequalities among individuals; on the other hand, promoting equality causes a levelling of individual freedoms. In the 18th century, rationalism, such as that exemplified by Kant, had attempted to reconcile those

2 With his idea of a socialist church, Bloch does not aim to transform the socialist State into something religious per se. However, Bloch is not a post-religious thinker, he is rather "meta-religious", i.e. he wants to inherit the rational and utopian content of religion: "*religion as inheritance* (meta-religion) becomes conscience of the final utopian function in toto: this is the human venturing beyond self, is the act of transcending in league with the dialectically transcending tendency of history made by men, is *the act of transcending without any heavenly transcendence but with an understanding of it: as a hypostatized anticipation of being-for-itself*" (Bloch 1995, 1288). It is with that purpose in mind that he proposes his idea of a future church.

3 See Simmel's discussion of Ferdinand Tönnies' book *Der Nietzsche-Kultus: eine Kritik* (1897) (Simmel 2000, 400-408), and his articles "Die beiden Formen des Individualismus" (1901), "Zum Verständnis Nietzsches" (1902), "Die Gegensätze des Lebens und die Religion" (1904) (Simmel 1995a, 49-56, 57-63, 295-303), as well as Simmel's last lecture in his 1904 book on Kant (Simmel 1997, 215-226), and the last two lectures in his 1907 book *Schopenhauer und Nietzsche* (Simmel 1995b, 348-408).

opposites by conceiving of freedom as reason itself, a faculty that is equally shared by all individuals. However, rational beings were considered here in abstract terms; their sensual nature and interests were seen as opposed to their freedom. In opposition to that view, in the 19th century, a more fully developed conception of the individual, exemplified by Nietzsche, claimed that the deployment of individual capacities is a real ethical imperative that is no less categorical than Kant's abstract one. According to Simmel, the antinomy cannot be actually overcome in any of its various forms. To be sure, he says, religion proposes an attractive solution, namely the idea of a community of love in which affectivity and reason, individual freedom and equality, would coexist under the form of fraternity. But this aspiration expresses a mere feeling and cannot be articulated discursively. As regards values in general, Simmel is by his own admission a relativist: to him, values are irremediably contradictory and we have no other choice but to decide for some at the expense of others.[4]

Simmel's influence on Bloch began when they studied together, and would prove to be long-lasting; in many respects Bloch's work can be considered an attempt to address Simmel's relativist challenge. Like Simmel, Bloch saw in the idea of community a solution to the moral antinomy. However, he did not consider community just as an ideal, bound to remain vague; rather, he endeavored to articulate it and to think its conditions of possibility. To him, the moral polarities described by Simmel are not antinomic. Already in his 1906 article on Nietzsche, Bloch glimpsed a possible birth of the Apollinian from the Dionysian (Bloch 2003). In many ways, this is what his whole work is about: a "rationalism of the irrational" (Bloch 1918, 254), i.e. an attempt to express and articulate in words and deeds the ontological determination that manifests itself – still in a merely negative and inchoate manner – in the contingent fact of temporal existence, which is experienced in the darkness of the moment being lived right now. This immediate present

4 Simmel justifies his relativism by what he sees as an aporia in our knowledge, i.e. a vicious circle between the whole and the parts of a fact. On the one hand, we may proceed analytically, from the whole to its ultimate parts, but this method possibly leads to an infinite regress in the analysis. On the other hand, we may proceed synthetically, from the parts to the whole, i.e. to the concept, but since the parts are ultimately out of reach, the concepts we build out of them can only determine each other "into a circle, so that one statement is true only in relation to the first. The totality of our knowledge would then be as little 'true' as would the totality of matter be 'heavy'. The qualities that could be asserted validly about the interrelationship of the parts would lead to contradictions if asserted about the whole" (Simmel 2004, 104).

moment is an infinitesimal nothing, i.e. an anticipation, a Not-Yet. Existence in time is irrational, but this irrationality is also in search of its own rational determination. One cannot understand Bloch's views on moral theory unless one considers them within this ontological and metaphysical framework, and without understanding the role played in it by "anticipatory consciousness" (see the title of the second part of Bloch 1995, 43), or, more precisely, by the Not-Yet-Conscious. As Bloch explains in *The Principle of Hope* (Bloch 1995, 122-127), it may happen – particularly in youth, in periods of creativity, or in historical times that might be turning points, and most of all when these three factors occur together – that new values and possibilities appear in the course of history. Such values are created by artistic, religious, philosophical and political geniuses, and they acquire a revolutionary power when – like Marx's thought, for example (Bloch 1969, 406-411) – they are associated with social movements. It is important to notice here that Bloch's theory of the genius differs on a crucial point from Nietzsche's conception of the overman or Weber's theory of the charismatic leader. To him, the values formulated by the genius are not just the expression of an individual irrational will, rather they may be rational and *a priori*[5]: they have an exploratory character, and through experimentation they may be proven necessary and universalizable. To Bloch, what the Not--Yet-Conscious anticipates through such values is the opposite of the darkness of the lived moment. It is oriented towards an illumination, towards what mysticism describes as *nunc stans*: the "standing now," the moment that would no longer pass away and therefore would be the opposite of the darkness of the lived moment. The experiences of the Not-Yet have an illuminative character that manifests, in a yet enigmatic manner, the *deus absconditus* that is latent in the creative subject.[6]

Considering this metaphysical framework, it is no surprise that when it comes to morality Bloch gives priority to individual freedom over existing norms, as freedom is the condition for the creation of values.

One cannot understand Bloch's views on moral theory unless one considers them within this ontological and metaphysical framework, and without understanding the role played in it by "anticipatory consciousness" (see the title of the second part of Bloch 1995, 43), or, more precisely, by the Not-Yet-Conscious.

5 Bloch considers the *a priori* in Kantian terms, as the necessary and universal conditions for possible knowledge. While he sees, as a reader of Simmel and Scheler, that Kant's conception of the *a priori* was relative because it was historically determined by Newton's physics, he maintains nevertheless the *a priori* as a form through which subjects become increasingly clear about the questioning that determines them cognitively and ontologically. The *a priori* takes the form of values, or ethical postulates, that are necessary and empirically universalizable. See Bloch 2010, 150-152, and the translator's notes regarding that paragraph.

6 See Bloch 1995, 1298-1311 and chapters 22, 48 and 49 in Bloch 1975. Bloch's insistence on the genius comes from a rejection of Hegel's panlogicism and from the reading of Fichte made by Emil Lask (see Pelletier 2010).

Adapting a distinction found in Aristoteles, Bloch speaks of a duality of ethical virtues and dianoetical virtues (see Bloch 1969, 219-233). Dianoetical, or "intellectual" virtues, are about productivity, creation. Such virtues are not bound by existing rules, and hence they may appear to be, and actually be, immoral. Opposed to them are ethical virtues, oriented toward goodness; they are inspired by love, or by the Marxian concern to overthrow "all conditions in which man is a degraded, enslaved, neglected, contemptible being" (Marx 1967, 257-258), and by the desire for freedom from oppression. Both kinds of virtues are in tension with each other and cannot be reconciled prematurely. Their unity arises little by little, through a revolutionary process whose end result shall be *fraternité*, a community of *Citoyens*, i.e. of free individuals who do not consider the other just as a limitation on their own freedom (Bloch 1995, 965-973 and Bloch 1986, chapter 19). A condition for such a community is equality, both juridical and real. In that regard, says Bloch (Bloch 1986, chapter 22), there is little to inherit from the moral theories of the past, since they all bear the mark of a class society, which they legitimize in one way or another. Even Kant's categorical imperative, whose *a priori* character might qualify as an authentic universal rule, remains ideological as long as it is observed within a merely formal democracy and the class society that supports it. The truth of moral theory consists in its utopian goal, namely classless society and community. In that regard, law oriented toward human dignity is a more primary framework than morality, as it is less constraining than moral duty and leaves individuals a larger space to express their subjective rights. In the classless society, leadership will not disappear; rather, canonical personalities will be embraced as models in the common search for meaning. Bloch insists here on canonical types like "the warrior, the wise man, the gentleman and especially the citoyen" (Bloch 1995, 391), and on literary figures who transgress human limitations: "Don Giovanni, Odysseus, Faust," and also Don Quixote, who "warns and demands, in dream--monomania, dream-depth" (Bloch 1995, 16, and chapter 50). However, the individual and the collectivity will be in harmony. Moral types and values that presently contradict each other, like sensuality and self--control, friendship and loneliness, *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*, will be considered as counterparts in a polyphony of differences among fully developed individuals (Bloch 1995, chapter 47). Community will pursue this search for the Supreme Good that would solve the riddle of temporal existence, and make the pursuit possible for everyone (Bloch 1991, 369-372 and Bloch 1986, chapter 25).

2. Bloch and Expressivism

Bloch's doctrine can clearly be related to what Charles Taylor calls "expressivism" (Taylor 1989, chapter 21), a philosophical paradigm that is prevalent in modernity. Expressivism claims that subjects are in search of various goods, which include the notion of a Supreme Good. However, these goods are not already known and available; they have to be articulated from within. Expressivism emphasizes the role of the subject's creativity in that search. According to this view, what we truly are cannot be known and made manifest unless we express it. Expression is not the communication of pre-existing content. Our original intent is not self-transparent; as we struggle to express it, to articulate what we mean, we give it a shape so that it may become perceptible to others and to ourselves. The act of expression is tentative, the goals that orient it are not clear from the outset and we only have a foreboding of them. Furthermore, since the consequences of the expressive act are not completely predictible, they can orient us in new, unexpected directions. Because of this exploratory character of expression, the subject cannot be bound by predetermined moral norms; expression may therefore have a transgressive and even revolutionary character when the social environment appears as an obstacle to the expression of the subject's aspirations and authenticity. On the moral level, a consequence of this open search is that individuals are free to conduct themselves according to ideals or conceptions of the good which, in the present state of the world, may not be commensurable with each other (Taylor 1985, chapter 9). However, through reflection they realize that it is led by a sense that, despite the extent to which these goods are opposed, those that concur with freedom and community are more important than others. In their attempt to articulate this feeling and this need for consistency and unity within their own lives and with others, individuals may be inspired by great characters who have imagined or reflectively elaborated values that can claim some coherence and universality. Also, they can themselves create new values, which then become debatable.

All these views match exactly with Bloch's metaphysics of a world that is contingent and in search of its own determination, and with his conception of the key role human beings play in this experiment. Bloch's philosophy also problematizes, in a way that is radically expressivist, the inner source of expression. The expressivist view considers the subject as an inner source – be it God or nature – that we can never articulate fully (Taylor 1989, 390). For his part, Bloch understands this inner source as something that does not pre-exist: it is rather something

temporal, the Not-Yet that attempts to be positively born, to come into being through our lives and values, actions and self-expressions.

3. Scheler's Criticism of Bloch

During his youth, his ethical and metaphysical views were subject to the critique of a perceptive moral philosopher: shortly after the publication of Bloch's first book, rumor had it that Max Scheler had described this philosophy as "a running amok to God."

Does Bloch's expressivist philosophy provide an orientation for life and action? During his youth, his ethical and metaphysical views were subject to the critique of a perceptive moral philosopher: shortly after the publication of Bloch's first book, rumor had it that Max Scheler had described this philosophy as "a running amok to God".[7] In my opinion, this is not just a rumor: both authors knew each other quite well from 1906 onwards (Pelletier 2009, 229-242), and Scheler's remark is fully consonant with his own philosophical conceptions. Scheler was promoting the doctrine of an *ordo amoris*, an "order of love," i.e. a transcendental hierarchy of values, whose presence in the world is made perceptible through our intuition of essences (Frings 2001, chapter 1). From Scheler's viewpoint, Bloch's rejection of every transcendental predetermination, with the exception of the utopian Good that is meant negatively in all our anticipative acts, may well have seemed to provide absolutely no roadsign for the human quest and praxis.

Even if one does not accept Scheler's ethics, based on *a priori* values "materially" present in the human world, his indictment of Bloch's philosophy is justified in some measure. Bloch talks readily about the morality that will exist once the classless society is achieved, but he has little to say about a moral and juridical framework that will guide our social and political lives in the meantime. On that point, he has provocative formulas about the duty of revolution, such as the "categorical imperative with revolver in hand" (Bloch 2000, 242). In a text from 1937 entitled "Salvaging Morals," he also takes up Hegel's famous reformulation of a sentence of the Gospel: "Seek ye first food, drink, shelter for all, namely the fundamental conditions for the kingdom of freedom, and morality will necessarily follow" (Bloch 1972, 160).[8] In this text,

7 See Siegfried Kracauer's letter of December 4th, 1921 to Leo Löwenthal (Löwenthal 2003, 31).

8 See Matthew's Gospel, 6, 33: "Seek God's kingdom and righteousness, and all these things (food and clothing) will be given to you as well". Kant had already adaptated this sentence as: "Seek ye first the kingdom of pure practical reason and its righteousness, and the object of your endeavour, the blessing of perpetual peace, will be added unto you" (Kant 1917, 177-178). Hegel's own adaptation is: "Strive ye first after food and clothing, and the Kingdom of God will fall to you as well"

Bloch states that the communist morality holds only one thing for good under all circumstances, namely, the will for a classless society; as to the concrete conduct to be observed in the struggle, it varies strategically with each situation (Bloch 1972, 159). To be sure, he adds, there is a risk here that morals will be reduced to mere politics, to tactical partiality. To counter that, he reminds his reader that one does not sacrifice one's own life for a production budget, and that communist morality must never lose sight of the *summum bonum* as totality, as the utopian, still unknown goal: "totality, although it certainly contains [the production budget], cannot be reached politically, and it is even less a mere item to guide and instruct politics" (Bloch 1972, 160).

However, while such a utopian perspective is welcome as a critical stance, it says little about a normative framework to guide action in the present. It is necessary to remark here that the text "Salvaging Morals" was written exactly at the same time as other texts in which Bloch attempted to explain and justify politically the infamous mock trials against Stalin's opponents in Moscow: at this time Bloch integrally accepted the idea that these opponents had betrayed their country and socialism.[9] Clearly, in this situation, Bloch's support of the Soviet Union and of the German Communists against fascism did not contribute to his moral perceptiveness and did not prevent him from the naivety and simplifications that were shared by many revolutionary intellectuals in favor of this socialist State. His attitude raises questions about the idea of the duty of revolution as first step toward socialism, and only later its ensuing morality.

4. Critical Remarks

Because of his insistence on freedom and creativity, Bloch had to reject the conceptual realism of thinkers like Scheler, who stated that eternal or *a priori* norms predetermine our action, and to that he opposed a "moral nominalism" (Bloch 2000, 187, and Bloch 1962b, 508) for which values and norms are positively known only under the guise of the Not-Yet-Conscious. But perhaps this language was partly inappropriate for articulating the problem of the values that should guide pra-

(Hegel's letter of August 30th, 1807 to Knebel, in [Hegel 1984, 142]).

9 See his articles "Kritik einer Prozeßkritik" (1937) and "Bucharins Schlußwort" (1938), in Bloch 1972, 175-184; 351-359. See also, in that same book, the postface written by one of Bloch's friends, Oskar Negt (Negt 1972, 429-444, see especially 432).

xis. Bloch's conception of the Not-Yet-Conscious was inspired by philosophy of life (mainly by Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, Eduard von Hartmann, Simmel), and by views on consciousness and time adapted from phenomenology and Christian mysticism. The recourse to these authors made possible very rich descriptions of the individual's experience: for example, about the fact that the subject's life is something inchoative, expressive, not in possession of itself. The good that is pursued by subjects cannot be defined from the outset, it is determined only negatively, as a Not-Yet. However, this perspective made it difficult for Bloch to articulate the relationship of the individual and the collective. Bloch assumes that in response to the negative experience of the darkness of the lived moment, anticipative contents and values may appear, enigmatically, in exceptional individuals. However, this conception may not be sensitive enough to the intersubjective character of the expression and constitution of new moral views. The expressive process cannot shape its contents independently from the whole web of language and meaning that contextualizes it indefinitely and through which subjective demands are constantly determined anew. The anticipation of moral values and postulates has a mysterious character due to the fact that – to use Charles Taylor words – expression discloses "certain ends of life, which we endlessly redefine, without their even becoming totally transparent, that is, without our ever fully understanding the reasons for them" (Taylor 2011, 55).[10] This constant redefinition of our ends by individuals cannot simply put in brackets the collective web of language that contextualizes and determines its meanings, and which it contributes to transforming.

The expressive process cannot shape its contents independently from the whole web of language and meaning that contextualizes it indefinitely and through which subjective demands are constantly determined anew.

This hermeneutical process also exists in the case of individual moral insights that are possibly revolutionary and strongly anticipative: it is in relationship with the language context that these insights get their exploratory character. This remains true in situations where moral leadership happens, like in the socialist church imagined by Bloch, which was to have been oriented toward community. Such leadership is open, it is meant to educate and help, and should not deprive the subjects of their right to freely express and share their opinions.

All his life, Bloch defended human rights and freedom. In his writings from the first world war, he protested against the authoritarian tendencies of the Bolsheviks and against "Lenin, the 'red czar'" (Bloch 1985, 196), and he stated that "without a democracy that […] is extended to the lives of the individuals, socialism is just a new kind of Prussianism.

10 About moral expression and creativity, see also Taylor 2016, chapter 6.

[…] It is 1789 and only 1789, not feudalism, not a divine State, that will have as a *result* socialism, true socialism, with a Marx improved a thousand times; and the new economic freedom to be conquered, i.e. the freedom from the economic, will keep readily the great ideals of *bourgeois* democracy; far from breaking them down, from shutting them down, from killing them in a Bolshevik social dictatorship, it will instead raise them to the level of full ideals of the *social* democracy" (Bloch 1985, 390).

However, after the failure of the German revolution of 1918, Bloch pragmatically turned his social hope toward socialist Russia (Bloch 1923, 34-35). He felt that he had to make compromises with Soviet politics, both because of his commitment to the anti-Fascist struggle in the 1930s, and because of his revolutionary will for socialism as a first step toward non-bourgeois morality. This attitude lasted until the 1950s, when Bloch himself became a victim of a communist State's authoritarianism. Shortly after, in his book of 1961, *Natural Right and Human Dignity*, he strongly asserted that social utopias need the complement of natural law as a framework: "Social utopias are primarily directed toward *happiness*, at least toward the abolition of misery and the conditions that preserve or produce such misery. Natural law theories, as is so readily apparent, are primarily directed toward *dignity*, toward human rights, toward juridical guarantees of human security or freedom as categories of human pride" (Bloch 1986, 205). In such a statement, which demands a juridical framework that guarantees freedom as a condition for the expressive moral search for the good, one can see both an autocriticism of his previous attitude, and a return to the democratic faith of his youth.

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Tytuł: O filozofii moralnej Ernsta Blocha
Abstrakt: Artykuł ten omawia źródła filozofii moralnej Ernsta Blocha, sformułowanej częściowo jako odpowiedź na relatywizm moralny Simmela. Przedstawia on również teorię Blocha jako spójny przykład tego, co Charles Taylor nazwał „ekspresywizmem": stanowiska filozoficznego kładącego nacisk na transgresywny charakter tworzenia wartości. W końcu, artykuł wskazuje na niedostatki ekspresywizmu Blocha, podkreślając konieczność uzupełnienia go normami zabezpieczającymi ludzką godność (której był świadomy sam Bloch).
Słowa kluczowe: Ernst Bloch, filozofia moralna, ekspresywizm, Georg Simmel, Max Scheler

LOREN GOLDMAN

Left Hegelian Variations: on the Matter of Revolution in Marx. Bloch and Althusser

Although Ernst Bloch is often understood as an abstract, aesthetic philosopher of hope, his doctrine of concrete utopia is underpinned by an idiosyncratic, vital materialist ontology. Against many of Bloch's critics, this article explains and defends his materialism as compatible with Marx's project. It first situates the early Marx's materialism in the generally Left Hegelian and more specifically Feuerbachian context of articulating a concrete account of human agency and social emancipation within a naturalistic framework. Two subsequent sections offer Bloch's "Left Aristotelian" approach to matter and the later Louis Althusser's "aleatory" materialism, respectively, as radical and tactically different variations on this theme.

Keywords: Ernst Bloch, Marx, Althusser, Feuerbach, Materialism, Left Hegelianism, Aleatory Materialism

Introduction[1]

Ernst Bloch's utopian orientation makes it easy to overlook the materialist ontology underwriting his philosophy. Indeed, Bloch's embrace of aesthetics and religion often led to accusations of idealist mystification, despite him taking Marx as his muse.[2] Bloch did not engage in detailed analyses of historical materialism, the typical site of materialist reflections in Marx's wake; instead, he offered a neo-Aristotelian vital materialism as the ontological basis for concrete utopia. While partly rooted in the subjective desire for a better world, utopia is also an objective affair for Bloch, tethered to the emergent possibilities of a world in the process of development: in his terms, the Not-Yet-Conscious of utopian aspiration has to be explained and managed in light of the Not-Yet-Existent inchoate in material reality (Bloch 1977, 13:212-242). Moreover, because utopia marks the transfiguration of history into a space of hitherto unknown genuine fulfilment, Bloch holds that matter must be able to generate novel forms out of itself. Although this ontological materialism might seem orthogonal to Marx's concerns about historical and social dynamics, Bloch considers it both consonant with Marx's insight into the world as a space of human production and necessary for Marx's aim of a world without alienation and exploitation.

Bloch's concept of matter thus serves to answer the question of how to make sense of novelty within a materialist framework. Its affinities to Marx's project run deeper still, moreover, insofar as both developed in response to the Left Hegelian problematic of explaining concrete human freedom in a world of mechanistic natural laws. For this reason, Bloch's account also echoes Marx's early "pre-Marxist" dissertation, *The*

1 This essay grew out of a paper presented at the 2018 *Ernst Bloch and the Marxist Legacy* conference at the University of Warsaw, Poland; an early version was given at the 2017 Western Political Science Association conference in Vancouver, Canada. For helpful conversations and comments, I thank Osman Balkan, Warren Breckman, Drucilla Cornell, Mihaela Czobor-Lopp, Stephen Darsley Rosie DuBrin, Jake Greear, Andrée Hahmann, Karolina Jesień, Adam Klewenhagen, Susanna Loewy, Cat Moir, Hadass Silver, Troels Skadhauge, Monika Woźniak, the Warsaw conference participants, and three anonymous reviewers for *Praktyka Teoretyczna*.

2 Within Marxism, "utopian" can be a dirty word, applied to aspirations untethered to "scientific" social theory; see Engels 1977 and Marx and Engels 2000, 245-272. For criticisms of Bloch as mystified, from Max Scheler, Max Weber, Siegfried Kracauer, Theodor Adorno, and Max Horkheimer, resp., see Wiggershaus 1994, 65, 69; Bouretz 2010, 427; and Adorno and Horkheimer 1994, 415, 539.

Difference Between the Democritean and Epicurean Philosophy of Nature, a work that similarly turns to ancient philosophy in order to articulate modern emancipatory prospects.[3] To be sure, Bloch's vital concept of matter is idiosyncratic, and it is important to recognize that he means it not as the be all and end all of Marxist materialism; rather, it is meant as a contribution to what he called Marxism's "warm stream" of prophetic vision, in contrast to its "cold stream" of sober analysis.[4] Bloch's materialism aims not only to generally create space for human agency in a naturalist worldview, but to do so specifically as a complement to deterministic models of Marxism. Insofar as Bloch intends his philosophy of matter to enable the creation of new possible futures, it should be read as a conceptual cousin to the later Louis Althusser's "aleatory materialism," which likewise reconstructs ontology for the purpose of spurring revolutionary action.

The first section of this article presents the early Marx's ontological materialism along with the Left Hegelian background with which Marx was engaging. The second section introduces Bloch's "Left Aristotelian" understanding of matter, drawing primarily on *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Left* and *Das Materialismusproblem*. The third section turns to Althusser's aleatory materialism as presented in *Machiavelli and Us* and the essays in *Philosophy of the Encounter*. As we shall see, Bloch and Althusser offer related yet surprisingly and even radically different —variations on the Left Hegelian theme of modern concrete freedom.

Theme: Marx and Left Hegelian Ontology

Marxist materialism is mainly associated with historical materialism, the view that takes production to be the essential basis of human existence and sees class struggle within various economic modes of production as the motor of progress (See, e.g., Marx 2000, 424ff.; Shaw 1991). This analytical frame is often tethered to a greater set of ethical claims concerning the poverty of life in the capitalist mode of production and a teleological philosophy of history pointing towards the eventual realization of an equitable, classless society that facilitates human flourishing. Bloch, however, had relatively little interest in the complexities

3 Not because of a direct influence, however, for Bloch's "Epicurus and Karl Marx," a pithy discussion of Marx's *Dissertation*, appeared in 1967, three decades after he had composed most of his writings on speculative materialism; see Bloch 2018, 153-158.

4 Bloch 1977, 15:141; see Mazzini 2012.

of Marx's historical materialism; indeed, one can search his work in vain for extended treatments of wage labor, property rights, and forces or relations of production, for example. While Bloch took Marx's ethical vision to heart and used his analytical frame to distinguish concrete from abstract hopes, his textual debts to the latter emphasize the centrality of human activity in producing the social world and hence potentially transforming it into utopia.

The essays comprising *On Karl Marx* (Bloch 2018), a 1968 collection his previously published writings,[5] reveal the tenor of Bloch's borrowings. Amid some 150 pages of commentary on Marx's student days, the "Theses on Feuerbach," the "Dialectics of Idealism," and Epicurus, to name but a few of the topics he addresses, Bloch confines his discussions of historical materialism proper to several pages in two of the volume's nine chapters;[6] instead, he mainly focuses on Marx's naturalization of *Geist* in the shape of humans working together to freely direct their own development. For Bloch, a thinker who posited flashes of light as the glimpses of our possibilities in the darkened moment, Marx was (as an 1843 engraving famously portrays him) akin to Prometheus gifting humanity fire, offering the power to illuminate our world. The "Theses on Feuerbach" drew Bloch's attention in particular and provide the subject of his most extensive reflections on any aspect of Marx's philosophy. As Bloch puts it, by anchoring human consciousness in matter, the "Theses" reveal that "[w]orking man, this subject-object relation living in all 'circumstances,' belongs in Marx decisively with the material base; even the subject in the world is world" (Bloch 1977, 5:303; Bloch 1986, 262).[7] For Bloch, the lesson of the "Theses" is the ultimate lesson of Marxism *tout court*: "The truly total explanation of the world from within itself, which is called dialectical-historical materialism, also posits the transformation of the world from within itself" (Bloch 1977, 5:310; Bloch 1986, 267). For understanding Bloch's ontology, the title of *The Principle of Hope*'s concluding chapter is indicative: "Karl Marx and Humanity; Stuff [*Stoff*] of Hope." The insight of Marx's materialist vision

As Bloch puts it, by anchoring human consciousness in matter, the "Theses" reveal that "[w]orking man, this subject-object relation living in all 'circumstances,' belongs in Marx decisively with the material base; even the subject in the world is world" (Bloch 1977, 5:303; Bloch 1986, 262).

5 This collection is not, as it incorrectly indicates, taken from The Principle of Hope, but from various works, primarily Bloch 1977, vol. 10.

6 The occasions of these chapters, moreover, seem to have demanded acknowledgement of both Marx's economism and his humanism; Chapter 6, "The University, Marxism, and Philosophy," is Bloch's inaugural 1949 lecture at the University of Leipzig (DDR), and Chapter 9, "Upright Carriage, Concrete Utopia," is a 1968 speech in Trier (BRD) commemorating Marx's 150th birthday.

7 In citing The Principle of Hope, I give paginations of both the original German text (Bloch 1977, Vol. 5) and the corresponding English translation (Bloch 1986); most translations have been emended.

lies in its description of human production as the motor of History, revealing humanity to be the matter (*Stoff*) out of which the future dawns.

Seen in this light, Bloch's materialism speaks to the Left Hegelian tradition in which Marx himself operated, a tradition that sought to explain the genesis of transcendent ideals within an immanentist and thoroughly materialist framework. The chief thinker in this regard is Ludwig Feuerbach, who argued that the Idealist philosophy of Hegel and his followers had misidentified the nature of God. According to Feuerbach, Hegel had claimed that all appearances in the world were in fact manifestations of *Geist*, or Spirit, unfolding across history, whose final form (or "Idea") would be achieved when its vessels realized themselves as freedom incarnate, as self-aware vehicles of autonomous spirit.[8] Along with other Young Hegelians like Bruno Bauer and Arnold Ruge,[9] Feuerbach sought to demystify Hegel's notion of *Geist*/God. As such, he deflated God to a projection of human activity: "What man calls Absolute Being, his God, is his own being" (Feuerbach 2012a, 102). For Feuerbach, the "God" or "Absolute" that is the ultimate subject in Hegel's philosophy is in fact the predicate of the true subject, humanity: humans reify their own highest qualities and aspirations and subject themselves to this displaced essence as a power over against and above them. Feuerbach then set as his task the demystification of this process, for "[m]an has objectified himself, but he has not yet recognized the object as his own essential being" (Feuerbach 2012a, 110).

Feuerbach's critical purpose was not to destroy religion, but to unmask it as a human creation that hypostatizes the best "I-Thou" relationship, thereby anchoring the idealism of theology in the materialism of sensuous life, of practical human relations. Demystifying religion in this way means grasping that its true end of realizing humanity's ideal qualities can only be genuinely realized in concrete life. Feuerbach therefore called for a new theoretical orientation that transcends both theology and philosophy, writing that "[p]*hilosophy must again unite itself with natural science, and natural science with philosophy*" (Feuerbach 2012b, 172). In a passage replete with Hegelian language, Feuerbach claims that his new philosophy

> is *the idea realized – the truth* of Christianity. But precisely because it contains within itself the *essence* of Christianity, it abandons the *name* of Christianity.

8 This is a wildly compressed statement of Hegel's philosophy of history; see, e.g., Hegel 1975, 46.

9 For an excellent overview, see Breckman 2019.

> Christianity has expressed the truth only *in contradiction to the truth*. The pure and unadulterated truth without contradiction is a *new truth*—a *new, autonomous deed* of mankind. (Feuerbach 2012b, 173)

Christianity, and by extension religion in general and *Geist* itself, is exposed as the idealized hypostatization of humanity's capacity for concerted action.

Feuerbach's impact on his younger contemporaries was profound. Nearly fifty years later, Engels recalled that, "[e]nthusiasm was general; we all became Feuerbachians" (Engels 1974, 18). For Engels, Feuerbach sounded the death-knell of Idealism, showing that Hegel's system was an inverted form of materialism in which nature became "merely the 'alienation' of the absolute idea" (Engels 1974, 24; 17-18). The ontology of matter consequently became a topic of serious philosophical concern, for Feuerbach had demonstrated that it "is not a product of mind, but mind itself is merely the highest product of matter" (Engels 1974, 25), a claim Engels himself appropriated in his *Dialectics of Nature* (Engels 1990, 327). Furthermore, Feuerbach's bringing of Hegel down to earth was not a return to the mechanistic concept of matter; rather, he enabled the embrace of matter as something in motion, with a past, present and future, as something "developing in a historical process" (Engels 1974, 26-27).[10]

Feuerbach's later work went deeper into this alliance of philosophy with natural science, as he sought to explicate the emancipatory implications of this focus on sensuousness. Indeed, the *Essence of Christianity* and *Principles of the Philosophy of the Future* are both animated by a kind of religiosity, crystallized in Feuerbach's metaphysical conception of the "species-essence" of humanity's infinite potential for goodness that he saw as mystified by Christianity (Feuerbach 2012a, 97). Although the idea of a human essence was put to great use by Feuerbach and others (including Marx in the *Economic-Philosophic Manuscripts*), it also received vociferous criticism – the radically individualist Max Stirner, for example, saw in it the specter of Idealism, the vestiges of the bad-faith

10 Engels also offers that three scientific developments after Feuerbach necessitated and accelerated a new conception of matter: the discovery of the cell, which meant that "organisms can change their species and thus go through a more than individual development"; a concomitant transformation in the notion of energy according to which it became considered "manifestations of universal motion" such that "the whole motion of nature is reduced to th[e] incessant process of transformation from one form into another"; and, finally, the Darwinian idea that "the stock of organic products of nature surrounding us today, including mankind, is the result of a long process of evolution…" (Engels 1974, 46; 65ff.).

projection Feuerbach himself criticized in Hegel (Stirner 1995, 33-35). Perhaps as a result, Feuerbach subsequently stressed the concrete basis of human ideals in their biological and practical activities. As he explained in his 1848-49 *Lectures on the Essence of Religion*, "that upon which mankind knows itself to be dependent is… *Nature, an object of the senses*" (cited in Schmidt 1973, 155).[11] This stress on his thought as a contribution to the philosophy of nature, an "anthropological materialism" that ostensibly overcame the dualism of body and soul, puts paid to the accusation of Feuerbach being a traditionally religious thinker, despite himself. Indeed, Feuerbach therefore claimed to his own satisfaction that,

> I negate God, which means to me: I negate the negation of humans; I replace the illusory, fantastic, heavenly position of the human – which in actual life necessarily amounts to the negation of the human – with the sensory, real, and consequently necessarily political and social position of the human. The question of the existence or non-existence of God is thus for me only the question of the existence or non-existence of the human. (cited in Schmidt 1973, 7-8)

The upshot of Feuerbach's thought was to turn the philosophical sights of those initially attracted by Hegelianism away from heaven and towards the earthly creatures who imagined it.

Marx's famed inversion of Hegel, the discovery of "the rational kernel within the mystical shell" of the latter's system (Marx 1990, 103), has its origin in Feuerbach's critique of Hegel's religion. Feuerbach's emphasis on Idealism's basis in concrete, practical activity, not to mention his later insistence that materialism and anthropology are one and the same, reduces all of existence to a natural foundation. Moreover, taken to its logical conclusion, Feuerbach's work pushes towards a central debate of late 19th century letters that elicited contributions from Engels and Lenin (See Engels 1969; Engels 1990; Lenin 1972) as well as non-Marxist philosophers like Hermann Lotze and Ludwig Büchner, namely the so-called "materialism debate" concerning the capacity of matter to self-generate, a controversy that revisited the determinism/freedom and theism/pantheism controversies of the 18th century in the language of modern science (See Beiser 2014, ch. 2).

Like Engels, the young Marx was enthusiastic about Feuerbach's transformation of Hegel. He was, moreover, primed for its reception. In 1841, the year Feuerbach's *Essence of Christianity* appeared, Marx

11 See Nikolay Chernyshevsky's discussion of Feuerbach, cited in Schmidt 1973, 159-160.

completed a doctoral dissertation under Bruno Bauer's supervision on the philosophy of nature in Democritus and Epicurus in which these ancient thinkers act as proxies for competing camps of Hegel's followers.[12] In *The Difference between the Democritean and the Epicurean Philosophy of Nature*, Marx distinguishes the two schools in terms of the role necessity and accident-cum-spontaneity plays in each (Marx 2006, 103ff.). Both Democritus and Epicurus, he explains, were thoroughgoing materialists insofar as they held that matter alone comprises the universe. Citing Seneca and Diogenes Laertius, Marx writes that while both philosophers claimed that all matter was falling in a void, Democritus's perspective was determinist whilst Epicurus allowed for unexpected developments. To use the language of the Epicurean Lucretius, a falling atom may experience a spontaneous "swerve" [Lat: *clinamen*] from its straight path (Lucretius 2007, II: l. 243). In Marx's words, as "the atom frees itself from its relative existence, the straight line, by abstracting from it, by swerving away from it; so the entire Epicurean philosophy swerves away from the restrictive mode of being wherever the concept of abstract individuality, self-sufficiency and negation of all relation to other things must be represented in its existence" (Marx 2006, 115). While this apparently simple difference between explaining the movement of individual phenomena might seem to be of little consequence, Marx holds that it entails an enormous difference in the possibility of freedom, and consequently the possibility of bringing new things into being. Marx signals this grander interpretation in the passage above when he describes the physical, spontaneous swerve metaphorically as an "abstraction" away from the straight path, paralleling Feuerbach's language of the human species-essence as the capacity to reflect and abstract from the givenness of a particular situation: humans, unlike other animals, can separate themselves from the present and imagine a different world. In this light, Seneca finds an ethical lesson in Epicurus, whom he cites as saying, "[i]t is wrong to live under constraint, but no man is constrained to live under constraint" (Marx 2006, 103; see Seneca 1917, 71). For Marx, the swerve of atoms, this abstraction from their straight path, is "the first form of self-consciousness" (Marx 2006, 117). Furthermore, Marx makes the ostensible (although by no means *willed*) freedom of the swerve an index for the human capacity to build autonomous social relations, for its ultimate consequence is the ability

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12 For details of the historical context, see McLellan 1972, 74-93, and Breckman 1999, 259-271.

to make friendships and covenants (Marx 2006, 118).[13] For Marx, then, Epicurus reflects the first glimmers of absolute consciousness (Marx 2006, 145), the first hint, that is, of the eventual realization of *Geist* as the Idea of freedom.

Marx's early foray into the philosophy of matter in his dissertation highlights two points that occupy later discussions of important matters, both concerning alternatives to determinism within a materialist framework. The first is how chance can exist in a world of material determinism; the second is how new things can come into being, or – to use a Kantian distinction – how the spontaneous causality of freedom comports with the mechanistic logic of nature. Marx holds that the swerving atoms of Epicurus make sense of both possibilities. It is worth recognizing that Marx is focused on physical aberrations in atomic trajectories, and that the accumulation of tiny swerves ultimately leads to freedom as an emergent property. Taken together, this possibility of aleatory activity within matter (between atoms) and the emergent possibility of freedom secure the material bases for believing that the higher-level social activity can be directed after a fashion. Both become significant topics in the materialisms of Bloch and Althusser.

First Variation: Bloch's Dialectical Matter

Bloch calls his ontological approach "speculative materialism," a moniker drawn from Hegel, whose speculative method, Bloch explains, works "through concrete concepts in opposition to mere abstract concepts of reflection" (Bloch 1977, 7:471).[14] By describing his approach as speculative, Bloch resists "limiting materialism to the realm of mechanical necessity," thereby leaving "an unfinished opening of the content of materialism to the realm of freedom" (Bloch 1977, 7:456). As the thinker *par excellence* of utopia, the problem Bloch faces parallels the problem facing Marx in the dissertation, namely how, on purely naturalistic grounds, we may envision the possibility of freedom *cum* radical difference.

Utopia is a concept that by definition (*u-topos*; "no-place") transcends the world. While Bloch's notion of utopia is transcendent, it is not metaphysically so. Rather than transcending material reality, full-stop,

13 Marx follows Diogenes Laertius; see Diogenes Laertius 1925, X:150.

14 On speculative materialism, see also Holz 2012, Moir 2013, and Moir 2019.

Bloch suggests a "transcending without any heavenly transcendence" (Bloch 1977, 5:1522; Bloch 1986, 1288), acknowledging that the realization of utopia would be radically different from the present world, but must still be *of* this world. To capture this qualitative difference, he distinguishes two types of novelty. On the one hand, there is *Neue*, good old-fashioned newness in a temporal or quantitative sense, the most recent or next iteration of an existing thing – a "new" car or a "new" recording of Puccini's *Tosca*, say, or Poulenc's *Flute Sonata*. On the other hand, Bloch introduces the category of *Novum* to denote the sort of qualitative novelty a genuine rupture with present social relations utopia would entail (Bloch 1977, 13:228; see Siebers 2012). This *Novum* marks a rupture with current evaluative categories; as Paul Ricoeur noted, hope's logic is absurd (Ricoeur 1970, 58). Absurdity and impossibility are not the same, however, and Bloch stresses the ultimately realistic nature of his enterprise. As he writes in *The Principle of Hope*, "[t]*here is no realism worthy of the name if it abstracts from this strongest element in reality, as an unfinished reality*" (Bloch 1977, 5:728; Bloch 1986, 624,). As a utopian cipher, *Novum* becomes *Ultimum*, the highest end of history, the ideal of human self-realization, "a total leap out of everything that previously existed" (Bloch 1977, 5:233; Bloch 1986, 203).

To this end, Bloch borrows terms from Hegel to distinguish between "abstract" and "concrete" utopia (Bloch 1977, 8:29). Abstract utopias are "not mediated with the existing social tendency and possibility," a category into which fall most of history's utopian projects, as well as the utopian socialisms attacked by Marx and Engels (Bloch 1977, 13:95).[15] Bloch's preferred notion of concrete utopia draws on an awareness of reality's underlying tendencies, a technical term in his work defined as "the energy of matter in action," with which he aims to convey Aristotle's notion of entelechy (Bloch 1977, 7:469; See Aristotle 1984, 1048a30-2; Moir 2019, 128-129.). Abstract utopias *cannot* exist, for there is no connection to real possibilities in the world. Concrete utopias, by contrast, do *not yet* exist but eventually *may*. Abstract and concrete utopias thus typify different sorts of possibility (Bloch 1977/1986, ch. 18). The former may possess formal logical possibility and may accord with the present boundaries of what is understood to be possible, while the latter possess "Real possibility," which involves both a recognition of the power of human agency as well as matter's latent tendencies. Put otherwise, the Real possibility of concrete utopia involves the creation of new possibilities that are drawn out of the world by dint of human action.

15 On utopian socialism, see n. 2 above.

The philosophy of matter enters the frame as the ontological basis for the Real possibility, and Bloch extends the stakes of the debate between mechanicism and spontaneity from freedom in general to the prospect of a radically different future. Like Marx, Bloch finds determinist naturalism oppressive. As he puts it, "[m]echanical materialism can have no utopia. Everything is present in it, mechanically present" (Bloch 1988, 12). Concretely utopian thought presumes that the world may be radically different than it now is, and such naturalism requires that we not take recourse to "abstract," magical thinking. For Bloch, a utopianism that remains naturalistic requires a non-mechanistic concept of matter that permits us to imagine the *Novum* as not-yet rather than impossible, whatever the present state of knowledge might suggest to the contrary. Therefore, only a notion of matter as dynamic allows "new shoots and new spaces for development" (Bloch 1977, 5:226; Bloch 1986, 197).

Neo-Aristotelian Materialism

Bloch calls his dynamic conception of matter "neo-Aristotelian."[16] For Aristotle, all things are compounds of matter and form; the former provides the material (say, wood or metal), and the latter providing the essence (say, chairness or bedness) (Aristotle 1984, 1032b1-2). A closely linked distinction concerns potentiality (*dynamis*) and actuality (*energeia* or *entelecheia*); matter exists in a state of potentiality – it has the capacity to become many things – which attains actuality when combined with form.[17] Bloch finds in Aristotle's *dynamis* structured and unstructured types of potentiality, differentiated by their capacity to receive form. The first, structured type of potentiality, *kata* to *dynaton*, Bloch renders as "*Nach-Möglichkeit-Sein*," translated as either "Being-According-to-Possibility" or "What-Is-Considered-Possible"; the second, unstructured type, *dynamei-on*, Bloch renders as "*In-Möglichkeit-Sein*," translated as either "Being-In-Possibility" or "What-May-Become-Possible." "What-is--Considered-Possible" (*kata* to *dynaton*) denotes that which is possible given what we know now, while "What-May-Become-Possible" (*dynamei-on*) is that which may prove possible regardless of the currently accepted notion of possibility. For Bloch, the latter type of potentiality provides the fruitful material basis of form, a dynamic ontological sub-

16 This section parallels Goldman 2019.

17 For Aristotle's obscurity on these issues, see Chen 1956.

strate that inscribes reality in the process of becoming. In line with his idiosyncratic emphasis on matter's unstructured potential, Bloch offers an idiosyncratic interpretation of actuality, the *energeia* or *entelechy* that impels the realization of form. Aristotle's entelechies develop teleologically, according to innate predispositions: given certain environing conditions, for example, an acorn develops into a tree. Bloch, however, draws on a different sense of entelechy, one only briefly mentioned by Aristotle: "open" or "incomplete" entelechy (see Aristotle 1984, 1048b29; Bloch 1985, 409). For Aristotle, unfinished entelechy describes progress in motion – the entelechy, for example, of a plane heading to Warsaw. Bloch interprets unfinished entelechy as related not merely to motion but to ends. Matter is in the process of development, and what develops it (and which it also develops) is for Bloch not a determinate final end, but the self-awareness that human action is the motor of history. Aristotle, in short, gives Bloch a language for naturalizing Hegel's *Geist*.

Bloch's materialism is neo-Aristotelian insofar as he models it on a particular interpretation of the form-matter relationship developed by a line of thinkers that Bloch labels the "Aristotelian Left," with conscious reference to the Right-Left split among Hegel's successors. As Bloch sees things, the dominant interpretation of Aristotelean ontology is marked by Aquinas, for whom form actively impresses itself from without upon a passive, receptive matter. By giving form pride of place, such "right--wing" Aristotelianism legitimates Church authority, for its holders could claim exclusive knowledge about the proper form human matter must take to enter the Kingdom of Heaven; the hierarchical power of clerics derives, that is, from their claim to have unique insight into how to free us from bondage our to sin and decay (*Romans* 8:21). Against this Aristotelian Right, the Left interpretation elevates matter to the role of active collaborator with form, in which matter itself actively receives essence and is not merely passively impressed by it.

The medieval philosophers Avicenna (Ibn Sina) and Averroës (Ibn Rushd), made three important exegetical turns that laid the Aristotelian Left's foundation. Avicenna's first major innovation, Bloch explains, was to argue that because the body does not outlive death, the soul cannot be seen as sentient (Bloch 2019, 16ff.). This removed the "metaphysical whip" of the notion of hell, alleviating fear of eternal punishment, the clerics' greatest weapon for keeping people in thrall. A second departure is captured in Averroës's doctrine of the unity of human intellect. Neither Avicenna nor Averroës limits reason to a cognitive elite, situating it instead in all humans as possible participants in active intellect; this move democratizes access to truth, against the privileged epistemologi-

cal claims of the Aristotelian Right. The third and most significant interpretive turn concerns the explication of form-matter. In contrast to the Absolute Idealism of extra-material form argued by Aquinas and the Aristotelian Right, Avicenna and the Aristotelian Left emphasize active form *within* matter. The constitutive collaboration of form-matter is not subsumed by matter, but rather, as Bloch explains, Averroës sees matter as predisposed *for* certain forms *if* circumstances for the latter's actualization exist. As Bloch glosses him, this reading of the *Metaphysics* "contains nothing less than the recognition of a specific mediation of progress, one that is necessary at every point and is determined by the maturity of conditions" (Bloch 2019, 55). Small though it may seem, Bloch views this move, by which one *could* argue that matter's variable capacity for receptivity shows it possesses a certain inherent "active" logic of form, as a crucial way station on the path to his own neo-Aristotelian vitalist, self-generating notion of matter. In Bloch's account, this perspective was taken by the medieval Jewish Andalusian poet-philosopher Avicebron (Ibn Gabirol) in his Neo-Platonic concept of "universal matter," which combined spiritual and material existence as the substance of a Plotinian "One," a view sketched further in Giordano Bruno's world-image of a self-fructifying tree of life (Bloch 2019, 57-67). Shortly thereafter, Spinoza's "God, or Nature" gives matter its due, and Marx encapsulates the entire Aristotelian Left's implicit (and concrete) hope of unifying nature and humanity in a "dialectically conceived materialism" (Bloch 2019, 66). In Bloch's account, then, the long sweep of Left Aristotelian thought culminates in Marxism.

Bloch's endorsement of this vital materialism led to the charge that his search for a naturalistic alternative to an inert, traditional Aristotelian account of matter surrenders human agency altogether. In this vein, Alfred Schmidt attacked what he perceived to be Bloch's subordination of humanity to a mystical *natura naturans* (Schmidt 2014), and Jürgen Habermas described him as a "Marxist Schelling," the Romantic monist philosopher of nature (Habermas 1983). Against such critics, however, it is possible to nonetheless understand humans as the effective agents of Bloch's supposed natural subject. In line with his use of Aristotle's notion of open entelechy, Bloch likens his philosophy to an "open system," unfinished for the fact that the world is abundant with new possibilities that active experimentation may yet disclose. When he speaks of Marx as the discoverer of the "matter [*Stoff*] of hope," his scientific language belies his metaphorical intent, for the *Stoff* that educes *Novum* out of matter is action – the human mind is, after all, but a form of material existence. Schmidt and Habermas are correct that the active

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agent in dialectical matter is akin to a *natura naturans*, but it must also be appreciated that on Bloch's reading, Marx, following Feuerbach, had definitively described humankind as nature's self-conscious aspect. In contrast to mechanical repetition, ever the same as before, Bloch describes the activity of this dialectical matter as a specific kind of repetition: "namely of the still unrealized total[izing] goal-content itself, which is suggested and tended, tested, and processed out in the progressive newnesses of history" (Bloch 1977, 5:232-233; Bloch 1986, 202). Creative human aspiration, the action of hope, is the natural subject animating neo-Aristotelian matter.

This stress on human agency as the active form educed in matter explains Bloch's interest in *poeisis*, both at the conclusion of *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Left* and in his work in general. Art, human creative ideation and production, enables us to glimpse potential futures, a process Bloch calls "liberating," or "birthing" form from the womb of matter (Bloch 2019, 42-45; see Goldman 2019, xxii). Bloch asks artistic activity to trace the utopian future within matter, to capture and draw out the positive potential of the dawning of a new era, in an evidently collaborative manner that entertains the promise of an eventual rupture towards novel evaluative categories altogether. Art thus offers a model of the future not merely as a dream image, but a "pre-appearance, circulating in turbulent existence itself, of what is real" (Bloch 1977, 5:247; Bloch 1986, 214-215; see Jung 2012). and one that is realized not by the sovereign imposition of humanity upon matter, but by dint of an "alliance technique" co-productive with nature (Bloch 1977, 5:807; Bloch 1986, 695-696).[18] The humanly vital materialism Bloch sketches in his neo-Aristotelian matter enables us to imagine and impel, through our capacities for creation, Real utopian possibility.

Second Variation: Althusser's Aleatory Materialism

Bloch makes sense of the early Marx's naturalism by linking action to matter's emergent Real possibilities, with the confluence of human agency and the world's inchoate tendency effectuating concrete utopia. Agency in Bloch, then, a thinker usually associated with subjective and aestheticized vision, is closely attuned to matter's ostensibly innate and objective (if still open) potential. By contrast, Louis Althusser – a figure associated with structuralism and the supposed anti-humanism of Marx's

18 Bloch also uses the phrase "natural alliance"; see Zimmermann 2012.

economic works – appeals in his own late materialist writings to the humanist Epicureanism of Marx's dissertation. When considering Althusser's ontology, it is important to tread carefully, for his reflections on "aleatory materialism" have no systematic exposition, and the lectures and sketches that comprise his posthumous *Philosophy of the Encounter* and *Machiavelli and Us* would presumably have been (re)organized and revised before being published (Goshgarian 2006). Moreover, some of these writings date from the period during which Althusser suffered a psychotic break, killed his wife, and was institutionalized; readers must reckon to some degree with those terrible facts.[19] These considerations are raised for neither morbid nor moralistic reasons, for they pose genuine hermeneutical challenges: against this background, it is fair to ask how seriously to take Althusser's musings on determinism and swerves, especially since the crucial language of chance and aleatoriness was added in Althusser's hand to the typed manuscript of *Machiavelli and Us* at an unknown date.[20] In any event, these caveats stated, two texts in particular warrant attention, *Machiavelli and Us* and "The Underground Current of the Materialism of the Encounter."

Although Althusser never mentions Bloch, he similarly claims to identify a hidden or subaltern tradition of materialism suppressed in traditional accounts of modern philosophy's development. Unlike Bloch, however, for whom this tradition travels through various attempts to understand Aristotle's form/matter relationship, Althusser traces its lineage to the cast of characters used by Marx in his dissertation, particularly Lucretius and Epicurus. While Althusser remains surprisingly silent on Marx's text, his own Lucretian naturalism is framed as a response to what he sees as a Democritean mechanistic materialism rampant in contemporary Marxism. Hence Althusser characterizes his ontology as

> *the 'materialism'* (we shall have to have some word to distinguish it as a tendency) *of the rain, the swerve, the encounter, the take* [*prise*]*… a materialism of the encounter,* and therefore of the aleatory and of contingency. This materialism is opposed, as a wholly different mode of thought, to the various materialisms on record, including that widely ascribed to Marx, Engels, and Lenin, which, like every other materialism in the rationalist tradition, is a materialism of necessity and teleology, that is to say, a transformed, disguised form of idealism. (Althusser 2006, 167-168)

19 See Althusser's harrowing (and likely false) narration of the deed in the opening pages of Althusser 1995.

20 See the editorial notes to Althusser 1999, 104-111.

In further contrast to Bloch, who traces a more or less continuous line of thinkers, Althusser presents an impressionistic assemblage: Lucretius, Machiavelli, Spinoza, Hobbes, the Rousseau of the second *Discourse*, Marx, and Heidegger. These differences aside, both Bloch and Althusser stress the threats to power posed by their respective hidden traditions. Bloch's Aristotelian Left challenges the supremacy of external form and hence the idealism that justified the Church's worldly power; in like fashion, Althusser's underground current challenges the "idealism of freedom," the belief that the human subject can autonomously impose itself on the world rather than be forced to reckon with its ambivalent status as the result of various intersecting socio-economic forces.

Like Marx in his dissertation, Althusser bases his materialism on Lucretius's swerve, the import of which is that "*the accomplishment of the fact* is just a pure effect of contingency, since it depends on the aleatory encounter of the atoms" (Althusser 2006, 169-170). As with Epicurus and Lucretius, so it is with Heidegger, Althusser reminds us, whose fundamental human category of *Dasein* begins literally, figuratively, and conceptually in the basic contingent thrownness of being-there (Althusser 2006, 189). More than anyone else, however, Althusser takes Machiavelli as the archetypal thinker of aleatory materialism. In Machiavelli's work, Althusser finds unusual insight into the nature of contingency, insofar as it sketches the various and *variable* factors that must align for a specific goal, in Machiavelli's case the unification of Italy. Machiavelli, on Althusser's reading, saw that "it was necessary *to create the conditions for a swerve*," and his dual reflections on Fortuna and *virtù* lead to the conclusion that "[t]he encounter may not take place *or* may take place. The meeting can be missed" (Althusser 2006, 171-172). Althusser therefore argues that the philosophy of the encounter is just as much a doctrine of the void as it is of matter, for the possibility of infinite deferral must be granted in order for the encounter to have meaning *as an encounter* rather than a fate altogether (Althusser 2006, 174). When Althusser invokes Marx here, he confesses that he calls the latter's philosophy "materialism" only in order to insist upon its "radical opposition to any idealism of consciousness or reason, whatever its destination" (Althusser 2006, 189). Althusser hereby stresses that the structuralist accounts of Marxism offered in *Reading Capital* and *For Marx* are intended not to lead to deterministic economism, but rather to contextualize voluntaristic action within the dynamics of social power defined by Marx in his own later writings (see, e.g., Althusser 2005, 229). The "scientific" Marxism for which Althusser is known is not therefore intended to replace humanistic accounts as much as situate their possibilities amidst the objective processes of socio-economic (re)production.

It is furthermore significant that Althusser describes how encounters "materialize" events with examples from natural science – of liquids congealing upon reaching a certain state, no less – expressing thereby how various determinate, law-like paths intersect to bring emergent novel formations into being. With collisions, things "take hold,"

> that is to say, 'take *form*', *at last give birth to Forms, and new Forms* – just as water 'takes hold' when ice is there waiting for it, or milk does when it curdles, or mayonnaise when it emulsifies. Hence the primacy of 'nothing' over all 'form', and of *aleatory materialism over all formalism*. In other words, not just anything can produce just anything, but only elements destined [*voués*] to encounter each other and, by virtue of their affinity, to 'take hold' one upon the other. (Althusser 2006, 191-192)

Althusser sees Machiavelli as an exemplary aleatory materialist insofar as the Florentine's writings illuminate the *overdetermined* face of reality, the practically infinite combination of liquid elements of social structure that must congeal in encounters in order for new things to begin. No laws cover all situations; instead, we must think of the plentitude of possibilities informing "an aleatory, singular case" (Althusser 1999, 17-18), the creation of a unified Italy, something unique and unprecedented and hence genuinely new. To theorize Italy before it exists is to reach for a beginning – *the* beginning, "rooted in the essence of a thing, since it is the beginning of *this* thing" (Althusser 1999, 6). The dialectical or aleatory thesis Machiavelli represents is reflected in the fact that he is constantly thinking in terms of potential options, "for *alternative conditions for the attainment of his political objective*" (Althusser 1999, 63; see 35). It is in this way that Althusser reads Machiavelli's rejection of traditional morality in politics: given the conditions, in some cases, murder is acceptable; in others, it is counterproductive.[21]

For Althusser, the logic of *The Prince* is the logic of contingent possibility. Machiavelli seeks "a favorable '*encounter*' between two terms: on the one hand, the objective conditions of the conjuncture X of an unspecified region – *fortuna* – and on the other, the subjective conditions of an equally indeterminate individual Y – *virtù*… As we can see, everything revolves around the *encounter and non-encounter*" (Althusser 1999, 74). As Althusser explains in more detail:

21 Thus, for example, during the consolidation of the Roman Republic it was appropriate that the anti-revolutionary sons of Brutus be killed, whilst Remirro d'Orca's murders in the service of Cesare Borgia's princely rule in Renaissance Emilia Romagna ultimately undermined the latter's cause; see Machiavelli 1996, 45, and Machiavelli 1998, 29-30, respectively.

> *Fortuna* must arrange the 'matter' that is to receive a form. At the same time, an individual must emerge who is endowed with *virtù* – capable, should he have to resort to them, of emancipating himself from dependency on another's forces so as to fashion his own by *virtù*; and finally capable of laying 'very strong foundations for his future power', by rooting himself in the people through *virtù*… In other words, the *abstract* form of the theory is the index and effect of a *concrete* political stance. (Althusser 1999, 76)

The Prince is not the only place one sees this sensibility, as a similar convergence of encounters has to be effected if the republican polity described in *The Discourses* is to last, a lastingness that is predicated, as Machiavelli put it, on bringing states back to their beginnings (Machiavelli 1998, 212). Althusser also draws on Machiavelli's plan for a citizen militia rather than the use of mercenaries, mentioned in *The Prince* and fleshed out in *The Art of War*. This army is the embodiment of the aleatory case, an invention of encounters that brings its purpose into being by its very constitution, and not merely as a paper constitution, but in a concrete assemblage of individuals: "with its popular recruitment, amalgamation of town and country, and supremacy of infantry over cavalry – forms and already unites the people whom the state is assigned the goal of uniting and expanding, simply by virtue of being constituted" (Althusser 1999, 89). And, bringing this whole discussion back to Althusser's framework of Marx's scientific structuralism, we gain insight into the contingency he perceives at the foundation of any political, individual or ideological formation: "the possibilities and limits of the nation's realization depend upon a whole series of factors – not only economic, but also pre-existing geographical, historical, linguistic and cultural factors – which *in some sense* prestructure the aleatory space in which the nation will be able to take shape" (Althusser 1999, 11; see 26). The key, of course, is in the meaning of the "in some sense" emphasized in this passage, for that is where one presumably encounters the real action, so to speak. Althusser does not, however, take us that far, leaving posterity instead suggestive hints of a materialism that ironically enough may reflect the need for the sort of humanism Althusser ostensibly denies. If the lesson of Machiavelli is, on the one hand, that propitious conjunctions occur contingently to enable unique events, the Florentine suggests just as strenuously that Fortuna values boldness, and that human agency may still channel the materialist current(s) of history, both underground and above.

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Conclusion

The problem of matter and action facing both Bloch and Althusser recapitulates the Left Hegelian problematic facing the young Marx: how to account for the possibility of freedom within a naturalist ontology, without recourse to a noumenal perspective or a transhistorical *Geist*. Marx turned to the philosophy of matter in Democritus and Epictetus in order to ground spontaneity in a deterministic world; his intellectual descendants Bloch and Althusser turned to ancient and pre-modern thinkers of the same in order to secure the consequentiality of free acts against rigidly scientific or structural Marxism. The latter thinkers' respective forays into ontology are meant, moreover, as complements to historical materialism. Put in Bloch's terms, both he and Althusser contribute here not to the cold stream of dispassionate social analysis but to the warm stream of utopian prophecy, sketching materialism for revolutionary action rather than for understanding the historical laws of social dynamics. The Not-Yet demands an ontology that allows genuine novelty to arise in this world.

Bloch and Althusser differ considerably, as we have seen, in the substance of their materialisms. Bloch emphasizes emergence, the drawing out of novel forms from inactivated dispositions in matter, and builds his neo-Aristotelian account on a line of teleological philosophers of nature. Althusser's aleatory materialism, by contrast, stresses the contingency of historical possibilities, in which chance encounters mark formal inflection points in matter's trajectory, a point he makes with reference to diverse phenomenologists of action. Attention to their respective ontologies reveals, furthermore, both thinkers to be markedly different than they are usually painted by Bloch is not a subjectivist aesthete fixated on the abstract horizon of the beyond, but a Left Aristotelian materialist whose concrete utopianism takes its cues from the world's emerging Real possibilities. Likewise, Althusser is not a static structuralist fixated on an immutable social framework, but an artist of contingency and encounters, of bold acts that may radically alter the trajectories of the world's ongoing processes. Each take, moreover, imagines a different tactical relationship to the present: Bloch tethers action to the development of nature's open tendencies, while Althusser envisions an energetic disruption of the processual status quo. They share, nonetheless, the common purpose of securing space for agency against determinist accounts of history, and present their ontologies for the sake of effectuating political action. Indeed, against those who malign utopian impulses as mystified, neither Bloch's nor Althusser's warm stress on

agency entails blindness to reality. Bloch sees novel forms arising from matter thanks to the informed (and in-forming) action of those who have reflected on its inchoate energies; in like fashion, Althusser highlights the (cultivated) qualities of judgment and prudence in Machiavelli that lend *virtù* traction and contingency its revolutionary potential.

Concerned as they are with deep ontology rather than the laws of historical development, the Left Aristotelian and aleatory materialisms offered by Bloch and Althusser admittedly underline, on the one hand, the decidedly unorthodox and idiosyncratic qualities of their respective Marxisms. On the other hand, by using the philosophy of matter to emphasize the possibility of utopian action and genuine novelty, Bloch and Althusser not only pick up an overlooked thread in the earliest Marx, but also stay true to Marxism's revolutionary praxis of fabricating a better future (see McManus 2003): "Philosophers have only *interpreted* the world in various ways; the point is to *change* it."

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Tytuł: Wariacje młodoheglowskie. O rewolucyjnej materii w myśli Marksa, Blocha i Althussera

Abstrakt: Chociaż Ernsta Blocha uważa się często za filozofa abstrakcyjnej i estetycznie pojmowanej nadziei, jego koncepcja konkretnej utopii opiera się na oryginalnej, żywiołowej i materialistycznej ontologii. Wbrew licznym krytykom, artykuł ten wyjaśnia i broni materializm Blocha jako ostatecznie zgodny z projektem Marksowskim. W pierwszej części artykułu materializm Marksa zostaje osadzony w kontekście Lewicy Heglowskiej, a w szczególności Feuerbachowskiego konkretnego ujęcia ludzkiej sprawczości i społecznej emancypacji w naturalistycznych ramach. Dwie kolejne części przedstawiają „Lewicowo-Arystotelejską" koncepcję materii oraz „materializm spotkania" Louisa Althussera jako radykalne, choć taktycznie odmienne wariacje na ten temat.

Słowa kluczowe: Ernst Bloch, Marks, Althusser, Feuerbach, materializm, lewica Heglowska, materializm spotkania

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Ernst Bloch as a Philosopher of Praxis

Contrary to the widespread portrayal of Bloch's philosophy as "mystical," "eschatological," "idealistic" etc., the essay shows that it is best interpreted through the framework of a Marxist philosophy of praxis. Similarly, to Labriola and Gramsci, Bloch develops his concept of materialism from Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach*. His concepts of the "highest good" and of an "alliance technique" take up young Marx's perspective of a reconciliation between humans and nature; his theory of anticipation and hope is centered on the development of collective capacities to act; even his "ontology of the not yet," which is often criticized for its teleology, is actually based on the concept of "open possibilities" and can thus be interpreted in terms of the "weak teleological force of open possibilities." However, from a praxis-philosophical perspective, Bloch's philosophy is also in need of a rethinking that overcomes its essentialist presumptions and pluralizes its teleology.

Keywords: Anticipation, Hegemony, Hope, Ontology, Teleology

After the Hungarian uprising of 1956, the German Democratic Republic's party and state leadership branded Ernst Bloch a dissident and declared his philosophy to be utopian, idealistic, mystic-pantheistic, and thus no longer Marxist. In 1957, he was forced into retirement. As a consequence he moved to Western Germany and started to teach in Tübingen. Against the backdrop of Bloch's oppressive marginalization, it is astonishing that many of the reproaches utilized to justify his exclusion from Marxism are unhesitatingly rehashed in recent scholarship. Whatever the corresponding value judgment, Bloch's philosophy is again portrayed by many as "idealistic," "eschatological," "metaphysical" or "mystical". Whereas Bloch tried to "inherit" the utopian impulses of religion in his perspective of a "transcending without any heavenly transcendence but with an understanding of it" (Bloch 1986, 1288), his dialectical critique of religion continues to be drawn back into the orbit of a religious enthusiasm. Hans-Ernst Schiller attributes to Bloch a "utopian, metaphysical-religious philosophy" with eschatological characteristics (Schiller 2017, 35). According to Terry Eagleton, Bloch's philosophy is a "mystical materialism" which "has smuggled quasi-divine properties into [matter]" (Eagleton 2015, 98-99). As Beat Dietschy observes, there is a widespread tendency to transform "what Bloch had held in suspense or considered as an open horizon of problems" into something unambiguously theological or teleological. "When he spoke of the *possibilities* of nature with which human purposes can ally or which social praxis could set free, it was interpreted as an objective teleology of the world process" (Dietschy 1988, 88).

Against the manifold attempts to sever one of Marxism's most creative philosophers from its traditions, I propose that Bloch's approach is best understood as an original contribution to a *philosophy of praxis*. The term was first coined by Antonio Labriola and further developed primarily by Antonio Gramsci. Both referred back to Marx's *Theses on Feuerbach*, whose first thesis contained the criticism that "all previous materialism" had conceived of reality "only in the form of the *object, or of contemplation*, but not as a *sensuous human activity, practice*, not subjectively" (Marx 1845, 3). It is no coincidence that Bloch also developed his concept of materialism against a static understanding of *Klotzmaterie* (clod matter) (Bloch 1985a, 17) from the *Theses on Feuerbach*. The Archimedean point of his materialism is the "working people" in their "social modes of satisfying needs" and in their relations "to people and to nature" (Bloch 1986, 286). Bloch's comprehensive concept of matter thus includes "consciousness" and "spirit" (Bloch 1985c, 234), which have been treated by traditional philosophy (and also "Marxism-Leni-

nism") as antipodes to "matter". As soon as one reads Bloch from a praxis-philosophical angle, one encounters numerous intersections with Gramsci which are all the more astonishing as the two were of course not familiar with each other's works.

I will divide my argument into two main parts. First, I will demonstrate the fruitfulness of a praxis-philosophical re-reading of both Bloch's anthropology and ontology. Underlying his concept of anticipation and the "not-yet-conscious" is a materialist, body-centered theory of agency; Bloch's daydream analyses can be read together with Gramsci's concept of "good sense," based on which the bizarrely composed common sense can be rendered more coherent; and his "ontology of the not yet" offers a complex interaction between a "strong teleology" and what I propose to call *a weak teleological force of open possibilities*. Second, I will discuss some weak points in Bloch's philosophy that need to be overcome or modified. His long-term utopian goals should not be formulated in terms of an "identity" without contradictions, but rather in terms of a contradictory process of transformation and reconciliation; and some essentialist and teleological presumptions need to be modified, for example, by connecting them with a Gramscian analysis of the respective hegemonic conditions for hope and hopelessness.

Anticipation and Hope

Some difficulties of interpretation are due to the fact that most of Bloch's concepts reach far back into his pre-Marxist early work and then experience a turn after his encounter with Marxism that gives them a new and specific meaning. A careful analysis needs to account for both aspects. A key concept of Bloch's anthropology, the human capacity of "anticipation", is a case in point: it can be traced back to his early works and thus associated with messianic, mystical, romantic, Goethian or neo-Kantian traditions (Rehmann 2012, 3ff). Bloch himself reports that the idea of a Not-Yet-Conscious struck him in 1907 at the age of 22 (Bloch 1975, 300). But in the *Principle of Hope*, *when* he proceeds to transform the different aspects of anticipatory consciousness into a systematic concept of his anthropology, his understanding of Marxism plays a decisive role. Bloch quotes Marx's famous portrayal of the worst human architect, who is distinguished from the best of bees in that he „builds the cell in his mind before he constructs it in wax. At the end of every labour process, a result emerges which had already been conceived by the worker at the beginning, hence already existed ideally"

(Marx 1976, 284). According to Bloch, it is "*precisely* at this point" that wishes and daydreams are formed (Bloch 1986, 76). Rather than having established an omni-historical and therefore "bourgeois" anthropological notion of human essence, as per official GDR-Marxism criticism of him, Bloch referred to some of the phylogenetical conditions that allow humans to actively participate in the respective social ensemble. *Critical Psychology* has conceptualized this as "societal nature" or "natural potentiality to sociality," which developed with the emergence of human labor, cooperation and language (Holzkamp 1985, 180). It is true that elementary capacities to anticipate future events can be observed in the animal world as well, but they receive a new quality and scope in cooperative human practices (Holzkamp 1985, 142ff, 260ff).

It is from this capacity of anticipation that Bloch construes his theory of *affects*. The affects ascend from urging to longing to wishing to wanting, which has already actively decided about preferential options – it is a "wanting to do" (Bloch 1986, 46-47). Against the widespread tendency of considering the drives as autonomous forces, Bloch proposes to reconstruct them from the point of view of the body: the human being is "an equally changeable and extensive complex of drives, a heap of *changing*, and mostly badly ordered wishes," often moving like "opposing winds around a ship" (Bloch 1986, 50), but "present throughout is only the body which wants to preserve itself" (Bloch 1986, 49).

The quality and scale of anticipation also help distinguish our "expectant" emotions from short-term "filled emotions" (Bloch 1986, 74). The ascending line then culminates in *hope*, which is "the most human of all mental feelings" (Bloch 1986, 75). Some critics argue that Bloch is simply projecting his political perspective onto his anthropology, which is thus subjugated to an externally determined teleology. What is overlooked in such a critique is the fact that Bloch founds his argument on a concept of agency directed towards the world, which is inspired by the ethics of Spinoza, particularly his distinction between feelings that we are passively subjected to (*passionibus*) and self-determined feelings driven by an enlargement of *potentia agendi*, our capacity to act. From this perspective, anxiety is not an ontological existential, as Heidegger wants it to be, but a "suffering, oppressed, unfree" emotion imposed on us (Bloch 1986, 75).

The linchpin of Bloch's anthropology is the development of cooperative agency. On the first page of *Principle of Hope*, he lays out that hope "goes out of itself, makes people broad instead of confining them." It "requires people who throw themselves actively into what is becoming, to which they themselves belong. It will not tolerate a dog's life which

feels itself only passively thrown into What Is" (Bloch 1986, 1). To throw oneself actively into what is becoming is of course a polemic against Heidegger's notion of "thrownness". Whereas Heidegger generalizes and ontologizes anxiety, elevating it to be a path towards "authentic" existence, Bloch develops the notion of a "comprehended hope" (*docta spes*) that can be informed and corrected by observation and analysis (Bloch 1986, 7).

From people's daydreams to a Marxist "doctrine of warmth"

Bloch's proposal that through the learning of hope we can overcome our state of confusion and anxiety (Bloch 1986, 1), can be compared to Gramsci's project of working on the coherence of our common sense, which is characterized by its contradictory and bizarre composition. It "contains Stone Age elements and principles of a more advanced science, prejudices from all past phases of history . . . and intuitions of a future philosophy which will be that of a human race united the world over" (Gramsci 1971, 324). In *Heritage of Our Times*, Bloch analyzed with a congenial intuition such historic discrepancies as contradictions of "non-contemporaneity" (*Ungleichzeitigkeit*). These non-contemporeneous contradictions are replete of undischarged future embedded in the past, which have been captured by the Nazis and need to be reclaimed by a multilayered and multitemporal dialectics (Bloch 1991, 97ff, 113). Both Gramsci and Bloch were searching for anchorage points in everyday life from which to transform contradictory common sense. Gramsci called this anchorage point *good sense* (*buon senso*), the healthy nucleus of common sense, characterized by direct observation and an open sense of experimentation (Gramsci 1971, 328, 348). "Organic intellectuals" of the subaltern classes must connect their philosophy of praxis with this *good sense* so that they can help elevate people's common sense to a more coherent level (Gramsci 1971, 326; Gramsci 1975, Q11, §12). And indeed, Bloch uses the two terms in a similar way when he states that the typically undialectical *common sense* is not sound at all but full of petit-bourgeois prejudices, whereas *good sense* is a "mark of fullness, of truly sound sobriety, [which] does not rule out any perspectives", except the detrimental ones (Bloch 1986, 1368).

For Bloch, the specific *good sense* anchorage points are the *daydreams* by which "everybody's life is pervaded" (Bloch 1986, 1). Referring back to Marx's remark, "that the world has long dreamed of possessing something of which it has only to be conscious in order to possess it in reality"

(MECW 3, 144), Bloch developed his monumental project of deciphering the history of the human dream. The inquiry ascended from the roasted pigeons of the land of Cockaigne to social utopias and natural right theories, to poetry, architecture, music and religion. What makes these diverse materials "speak" is Bloch's sense for the rebellious and liberative dimensions they contain in revealing the "pre-appearance" of a classless society without domination and alienation.

Bloch scholars are often so fixated on Bloch's distant "eschatological" goals that they overlook his methodological claim to develop utopian elements out of the most proximal realities: "the Here and Now, what is repeatedly beginning in nearness, is a utopian category, in fact the most central one" (Bloch 1986, 12).

Bloch scholars are often so fixated on Bloch's distant "eschatological" goals that they overlook his methodological claim to develop utopian elements out of the most proximal realities: "the Here and Now, what is repeatedly beginning in nearness, is a utopian category, in fact the most central one" (Bloch 1986, 12). According to Enrique Dussel, Bloch develops a particular materialistic method that starts from "living being [ser-vivente] in connection to a possible new future" (Dussel 2013, 335f). And it is specifically in his aphorisms on daydreams that he precisely observes what at times gets lost in the more general parts of his philosophy, namely, the extent to which everyday wishes are overdetermined by class rule and its ideologies: the wishful images in the mirror often only reflect "how the ruling class wishes the wishes of the weak to be" (Bloch 1986, 13), "the threatened man looks at himself with the eyes of his master," and when he puts himself at an advantage, it is actually "the advantage which the real masters gain from the little man" (Bloch 1986, 340). In short, many of the small daydreams are related to "present life that should just yield a better pay-off" (Bloch 1975, 42). Nevertheless, what qualifies them as anchorage points of "good sense" is their anticipatory potential: "even the most private and unknowing wishful thinking is to be preferred to the unconscious walking in single file; because it can be informed" (Bloch 1986, 1365; transl. altered).

The arc leading from Bloch's notion of daydreams to his Marxist "doctrine of warmth" cannot be explained primarily from his early pre-Marxist works, but rather from the operative strategy by which he intervenes in the contentious force field of Marxism. The context of this intervention is first, the worldwide split of the labor movement between social-democracy and the Communist International, and second, a narrowing and atrophying of anticipatory potentials, which he perceives on both sides of this split. Indeed, the "Marxism" received by the labor movement in both the "reformist" and the "revolutionary" factions was primarily understood as a "science of the laws of history" and a "doctrine of development" (see Rehmann 2014, 61ff).

Therefore, Bloch had good reasons to bend the stick in the opposite direction. In *Heritage of Our Times*, he criticized determinism and one-

-sided rationalism as Marxism's main shortcomings, which served to facilitate the ideological appeal of fascism, its successful "thefts from the commune" (Bloch 1991, 64). When "vulgar Marxism had forgotten the inheritance of the German Peasant Wars and of German philosophy, the Nazis streamed into the vacated, originally Münzerian regions" (Bloch 1991, 140). He concluded that Engels' proclamation of socialism's progress from utopia towards science led to an "undernourishment of revolutionary imagination" so that "the pillar of fire in utopias [...] could also be liquidated along with the cloud" (Bloch 1986, 622). Against this backdrop, Bloch's philosophy is to be understood as a project to reconnect the split-off utopian impulses with the analytical achievements of Marxist critique. Bloch extended Marxist theory so that it is able to reintegrate both sides and put them in a dialectical combination. The determinate negation of Marxist critique is reframed as "cold stream," characterized by a concrete "science of condition [...] of struggle and opposition," coupled with an "unmasking of ideologies" and a "disenchantment of metaphysical illusion" – an indispensable caveat against utopian tendencies of "overhauling, skipping over, flying over" (Bloch 1986, 208). The concept of „warm stream" explores and articulates the liberating intentions that are oriented towards a „utopian totum" in which humans, their world and nature are no longer alienated from each other (Bloch 1986, 209). As a "doctrine of warmth", Marxism becomes a "theory-praxis of reaching home" (Bloch 1986, 209-210.). Similar to Rosa Luxemburg, who tried to reconnect the distant revolutionary goals and the closer goals of realistic reforms by her famous formula of "revolutionary Realpolitik" (Luxemburg 1970-5, Vol. 1/1, 373), Bloch described the two sides of progressive politics both as a contradiction – acerbity vs. faith (Bloch 1986, 208) – and as a complementary connection: "Only coldness and warmth of concrete anticipation together [...] ensure that neither the path in itself nor the goal in itself are held apart from one another undialectically and so become reified and isolated" (Bloch 1986, 209).

Summum bonum, the highest good

Bloch's formulations of distant utopian goals are mainly inspired by the young Marx's perspective in the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* in which the overcoming of alienation in a classless society does not only apply to relationships among humans, to their labor and their potential as a species, but must also comprise a reconciliation with nature to which they belong: the communist society is characterized by "the

complete unity of man with nature – the true resurrection of nature – the accomplished naturalism of man and the accomplished humanism of nature" (MECW 3, 298). Thus, this anticipated reconciliation between humans, their world and nature becomes the core of Bloch's concept of the "highest good" (*summum bonum*). The most diverse hope images designate a "peak of the dreams of a better life" (Bloch 1986, 305): there is an "irrefutable feeling that the better cannot be surpassed infinitely", that there must be a fulfilling "thus far and no further" (Bloch 1986, 1313). What was expressed traditionally as "God", the "kingdom of God" or the "realm of Freedom" is "the identity of man who has come to himself with his world successfully achieved for him" (Bloch 1986, 313).

The usual portrayal of Bloch's *ultimum and summum bonum* as a quasi-religious eschatology (see Holz 2012, 503, 507) misses the point that Bloch's this-worldly translation of "last things" does not provide a savior nor a guarantee. According to Johan Siebers, Bloch tried to express the eschatological principle "the last hour remains hidden" in a "tentative image [*Versuchsgestalt*] of identity" of existence and essence, or "Heimat" (Siebers 2012, 582, 587). However, this leads to the paradox that as soon as one interprets such a "tentative image" in an empirical way, one is confronted with the problem that any completely achieved "identity" would result in an entropic standstill, which is in turn incompatible with a dialectical understanding of history driven by contradictions. Bloch himself was aware of this methodological problem and described it as one of the "true materialist *aporias* and *antinomies*" (Bloch 1985a, 116): the highest good "does not encounter the process with its transitorinesses, and consequently is not encountered by them either," because any achieved identity "would no longer enter [...] into any process, [...] there would no longer be any occasion for process" (Bloch 1986, 1179). However, if Bloch's ultimate goal is "exterritorial to the process", as Siebers argues (Siebers 2012, 588), it assumes a similar status to Kant's "regulative idea". But this Kantian interpretation contradicts Bloch's objection that Kant's postulate of a fundamental elusiveness of the highest good reveals an "abrupt undialectical dualism" establishing an insurmountable barrier between a disconnected ideal and a remote ideal and reality (Bloch 1986, 1320 et sq.).

The praxis-philosophical relevance of Bloch's *summum bonum* can be seen in the way he reformulates the young Marx's notion of a reconciliation between humankind and nature in terms of a "technology of alliance [*Allianztechnik*], which is mediated with the co-productivity of nature" (Bloch 1986, 690).

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in nature like an army of occupation in enemy territory", without knowing the interior of the country (Bloch 1986, 696), a "Marxism of technology" has as its task to end "the naive application of the standpoint of the exploiter and animal tamer to nature" and to forge a non-exploitative "nature alliance" (*Naturallianz*) that frees up "the creations slumbering in the womb of nature" (Bloch 1986, 695; see Bloch 1985d, 251). The objective is an "unparalleled hook-up [*Verhakung*]…, a real installation of human beings (as soon as they have been socially mediated with themselves) into nature (as soon as technology has been mediated with nature)" (Bloch 1986, 698).

What is at stake in the *summum bonum* is what we could call an eco-socialist perspective. Notwithstanding some illusions regarding technological progress in the Soviet Union finally freed from capitalistic "fetters", and in particular Bloch's support for a peaceful use of nuclear energy without considering the still unresolved problem of the permanent disposal of nuclear waste (Bloch 1986 660, 663f), his concept of alliance technology can be seen as a theoretical alternative to the environmental destruction in the "Capitalocene". Bloch's philosophy of nature is certainly not without speculative exaggerations (see below), but his basic argument regarding a connection of nature's and human history contains valid insights. It resurfaces in recent ecological theories, which characterize this relationship as "co-evolution" (see Foster 2010, 230, 239, 247, 262). The Marxist concept of human praxis needs to be deepened so that it includes our natural roots in the past and present and places the orientation towards sustainable human-nature relationships in the center of the *humanum* (see Haug 2017, 9f).

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Can we read Bloch's "Ontology of the Not-Yet" in a praxis-philosophical key?

Bloch, who already as a student desired to design an overall philosophical system "against which the Hegelian system would look like a doghouse" (Zudeick 1987, 48), also inscribed his Marxist philosophy of praxis in the framework of a classic system philosophy. It is clear that such an inscription did not come without speculative risks. He took up traditional philosophical concepts—origin, essence, teleology, identity, highest good etc.— severed them from their dependency on pre-given objectives and redefined them from the perspective of an "ontology of the not-yet", according to which the "true genesis is not at the beginning but at the end" (Bloch 1986, 1375). Whether we consider Bloch's

ontology, as Lukács did, as a non-Marxist "utopian system" (see Bloch 1975, 33-34) or as a materialist anchorage of this anthropology in reality, depends first and foremost on whether we read it as a teleology engrained in history and nature or rather in the hermeneutical key of open possibilities. Both readings can be supported by quotes, at times within the same sentence. It seems that Bloch wrote in both keys at the same time and used the ambiguity as a subversive stylistic means to force "these petrified relations [...] to dance by singing their own tune to them" (MECW 3, 178).

Adorno applied one of the hermeneutic keys when he called Bloch an "idealist *malgré lui*". He criticized an "innermost antinomy" of Bloch's thought, namely that it "conceives the end of the world as its ground, that which moves what exists, which, as its *telos*, it already inhabits" (Adorno 1991, 213). Eberhard Braun objected to this interpretation and argued that Bloch's *telos* had not the status of a necessity, but belonged to the mode of possibility, whose reality was not yet decided (Braun 1983, 124f, 128, 131). Indeed, when Bloch's anthropology transitions to an "Ontology of the Not-Yet" in the 17th and 18th chapters of the *Principle of Hope*, the argument is centered on the concept of "real possibility", in which utopian imagination finds its "concrete correlate" in the world (Bloch 1986, 197). On the side of the subjective factor, we find an active possibility, a capability-of-doing-other, a potency to turn things, while on the side of the objective factor we find a passive possibility, capability-of-becoming-other, potentiality, turnability, changeability of the world (Bloch 1986, 232-233, 247). The traditional version or teleology, according to which the purpose is preordained at the beginning and exists there "according to its ‚disposition' [*Anlage*] in reduced form, as if *encapsulated*" is thus rejected, but Bloch holds on to a "genuine teleology problem itself," whose purposes "are only just forming in active process, always arising anew within it and enriching themselves" (Bloch 1986, 1373-1374). Certainly, some expressions like "entelechetical latency", or "disposition" (*Anlage*) or "urge of the material" (Bloch 1985a, 464, 474-475; Bloch 1986, 18) seem to suggest that the goals are already embryonically contained in reality, which might motivate Eagleton's quip that according to Bloch's ontology, communism is already "implicit in the structure of the amoeba" (Eagleton'2015, 99). But Bloch also turns explicitly against such an in-built entelechy, e.g. when he argues that the humanization of nature "has no parental home at the beginning from which it runs away and to which, with a kind of ancestor cult in philosophy, it returns" (Bloch 1986, 204). When he uses the term "seed" (*Keim*), he does so in quotation marks and adds

that it "awaits many leaps," while the "inherent propensity" (*Anlage*), again in quotation marks, "unfolds itself in the unfolding itself to ever new [...] beginnings of its potentia-possibilities" (Bloch 1986, 238). He thus takes up the traditional terms *Keim* and *Anlage* and defines them in a way that playfully subverts their traditional meaning.[1]

Furthermore, Bloch's teleology is disrupted by the fact that the key concepts of his philosophy – the *ultimum*, latency, tendency, *novum* etc. – are by no means necessarily directed toward a good outcome, but are shot through by the alternative between "salvation" and "disaster." They contain the possibility of an "absolute In-Vain of the historical process," the "sealed frustration of utopia" (Bloch 1986, 312-313), a "latency of Nothing" which designates what was traditionally called evil and announces itself as annihilation, disintegration, threatening chaos (Bloch 1986, 1296), exemplified by "the eruption of fascist hell" (Bloch 1986, 233). The positive outcome of the possible can only become a reality when it has an "active hope as an ally" (Bloch 1985a, 141), the objective factors of potentiality are reliant on the "capacity, the potency of the actualizing subject" (Bloch 1985a, 255).

This explains the vehemence with which Bloch criticizes the "automatic progress-optimism" as a "new opium for the people," to which "even a dash of pessimism would be preferable" because "at least pessimism with a realistic perspective is not so helplessly surprised by mistakes and catastrophes, by the horrifying possibilities [...] precisely in capitalist progress" (Bloch 1986, 198-199). This resembles Gramsci's critique of "mechanical determinism" as a "substitute for the Predestination" and a "religion of the subaltern", which means that the "activity of the will" is present "only implicitly, and in a veiled and, as it were, shamefaced manner" (Gramsci 1971, 336f). And when Bloch proposes to combine a "thinking *ad pessimum*" with a "militant optimism" (Bloch 1986, 199), he describes a similar attitude of working in and with contradictions as expressed in Gramsci's famous formula "pessimism of the intelligence, optimism of the will" (Gramsci 1975, 1131).

As soon as we read Bloch's ontology of the not-yet in the key of open possibilities, we discover something that is clearly distinguished from the catchwords of a "matter driving forwards", equipped with its own (though only hypothetical) "nature subject" and "utopia" (Bloch 1985c, 207; Bloch 1985d, 251). Beneath this "strong" teleology, there is a much

1 According to Cat Moir, Bloch's teleology is one "without a pre-given *telos*, in which the goal itself, the 'essence' of what the world might be, is still being worked out in a complex dialectical process of becoming from which contingency and chance are […] far from absent" (Moir 2019, 72).

Concrete hope, which does not give up when faced with setbacks, presumes that possibilities are still open and the world remains an "experimenting laboratory *possibilis salutis*" (Bloch 1985b, 389, 391).

more modest and careful orientation toward the not-yet, which by referencing Walter Benjamin's "weak messianic force" (Benjamin 2007, 254), we might characterize as *a weak teleological force of open possibilities*. Its core is that "it is not yet the evening to end all days, every night still has a morning" (Bloch 1986, 305). Even well-founded hope contains "*eo ipso* the precariousness of failure", because it stands in the undecidedness of the world process (Bloch 1985b, 387). Concrete hope, which does not give up when faced with setbacks, presumes that possibilities are still open and the world remains an "experimenting laboratory *possibilis salutis*" (Bloch 1985b, 389, 391).

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Taking Bloch's philosophy seriously also means critically confronting it with the challenges of the 21st century. It is obvious that Bloch had long repressed the crimes of Stalinism. It was only from 1956 that he recognized the extent of the deformations of Soviet state socialism.[2] However, its ultimate downfall, which impacts our "post-socialist" age, was not foreseeable for him. His self-understanding of being an organic intellectual of a socialist labor movement, which saw capitalist society in decline and itself in the ascendant in spite of all the setbacks and defeats, certainly set the tone of his writings. We need to take the historical distance between Bloch's time and our post-1989-era into consideration when we evaluate and update his philosophy today. The following four theses deal with the question of what is still relevant today and what is in need of a correction and renewal.

1. Even if under the conditions of neoliberal capitalism seemingly without alternative, we agreed with Habermas' diagnosis that there is an "exhaustion of utopian energies" (Habermas 1985, 144f), this would not be a valid argument against a philosophy of the Not-Yet, which deciphers the utopian impulses in people's daydreams and the big "outlines of a better world." This also applies to Bloch's courage to take up and to think through the different utopias of a *summum bonum*. Leftist projects and social movements should not be content with living "hope-lessly in the present" (Thürmer-Rohr 1991, 22), but need to develop appealing, convincing and powerful counter-images of a "good life."

2 According to a friend's report, he collapsed when he got acquainted with *Khrushchev's* secret speech at the 20th party congress of the CPSU in 1956 (see Zudeick 1987, 227).

However, what we need to leave behind is the way Bloch conceptualizes the overcoming of alienation between humans and their social world and nature in terms of "identity". As Bloch himself understood very well, the implied lack of contradictions and differences would result in an end of history. In order to prevent distant goals assuming (against Bloch's intention) the function of a Kantian "regulative idea", we should conceptualize them as contradictory forms of a movement as well. The *summum bonum* is to be re-formulated as a dynamic process by which antagonistic contradictions are transformed into non-antagonistic and workable contradictions and differences.

2. In the context of the anti-teleological *Zeitgeist* of our "postmodern" times, we need to ask whether or in what respect we must *de-teleologize* Bloch's philosophy or to pluralize its perspective. It appears that Bloch intended to go in this direction as well. In *Heritage of Our Times*, he tried to uncouple the concept of progress from its linear framework and to connect it to the notion of a "polyrhythmic and multi-spatial" history (Bloch 1991, 62). He later systematized this insight with his concept of a polyphonic spatial temporal "multiverse" (Bloch 1985c, 125, 128-129). The concept of progress is not to be understood in a unilinear way, but needs a "broad, elastic, completely dynamic multiverse, an upholding and entwined counterpoint of historical voices" (Bloch 1985c, 146).

What we need to deconstruct is his "strong" teleology of a "matter driving forward". Bloch is right when he objects to Hegel by stating that nature is no pre-historical "gigantic corpse" (Bloch 1985c, 235), but rather a creative *natura naturans*, which as an ensemble of efficacious processes permanently engenders new developments, contents and forms. But when Bloch attributes this productivity to a "nature subject," though only a "hypothetical" one, and to an "entelechy," though an "unfinished" one (Bloch 1985a, 461, 476), he brings his ontology in conflict with modern biology, which rightly insists that processes in nature, including the mechanisms of selection discovered by Darwin, are non-teleological. Both the development of nature and human history are to be conceptualized without a big, intentional and directing subject. We do not need a teleology of nature in order to conceptualize a "nature alliance" by which technology connects with nature's productivity in a sustainable way.

But this criticism does not apply to what I conceptualized as Bloch's *weak teleological force of open possibilities*. The fact that we humans are equipped with the ability to imagine goals and to anticipate future outcomes also means that we are bound to project our thoughts and actions towards objectives. In this sense, we can use Antonio Negri's

concept of a "teleology of praxis" oriented towards the construction of the common (Negri 2013, 8, 78f). Social movements and political projects need to develop their teleologies (and corresponding genealogies) in order to intervene into the force fields of social purposes. There is no reason to consider this as philosophically objectionable per se, as long as the projected perspective is made transparent.

Social movements and political projects need to develop their teleologies (and corresponding genealogies) in order to intervene into the force fields of social purposes.

3. Most of the controversies around Bloch's philosophy touch upon the question of whether his concept of hope is essentialist in the sense that it is conceived as a fundamentally benign and life-affirming force that is only afterwards hijacked and manipulated by the ruling elites. Indeed, we can see some symptomatic blank spaces that seem to corroborate such a suspicion. As feminist critics have pointed out, the patriarchal and oppressive patterns inscribed in everyday wishes usually go unnoticed in Bloch's interpretation (F. Haug 1984, 690-691; see Thürmer-Rohr 1991, 24-27). He is fascinated by the communist "basic resonance" of the biblical Exodus story and the utopian splendor of the Promised Land "flowing with milk and honey", but disregards the account of the book of Joshua about mass butchery that follows the entry of the Israelites into Canaan. When he deals with Christopher Columbus, he focuses on his utopian fantasies of an earthly paradise (Bloch 1986, 752, 776-777), however without considering his role in colonial conquests and their genocidal outcomes. By juxtaposing the "strength and dignity" of Columbus' intention with the later conquests of "criminals Like Cortez and Pizarro" (Bloch 1986, 777), Bloch reproduces a Eurocentric myth. "Also war ships can [...] carry the figurehead of Speranza," argues Beat Dietschy, who proposes a postcolonial deconstruction of Bloch's approach that would start from the "absences of the others, who have been rendered invisible" (Dietschy 2017, 236-237).

These blind spots are symptomatic. Bloch designs the anthropological and ontological foundation of hope on a general philosophical level that tends to dissimulate the fundamental ambivalence of hope in class societies. In actual life, we do not move around as "human species beings," but rather as specific social subjects whose *habitus* is formed by different class positions, races and genders. In class societies, the fortunes of some go hand in hand with the miseries of others, so that the hopes of some coincide with the despair of the others. It is of course legitimate to conceptualize hope on a general anthropological level as a creative force for the good life for all, but we need to be aware that this is can only be formulated in a mode of possibility. In reality, hope itself is an antagonistic force field traversed by multiple contradictions. Here, we need a stronger "cold stream". Bloch's philosophy needs to be

combined with a critical theory of ideological subjection, which would in turn help us to *de-essentialize* his concept of hope. When Bloch argues that hope enables us to throw ourselves actively into what is becoming (Bloch 1986, 1), we also need to take into account how the given structures and fields into which we "throw" ourselves and through which we move, form our wishing, wanting and hoping. The expectant affects are not just "there", but are socially construed and become habituated. Hope can function as an opiate of the people, no less than religion. It can easily be kindled, exploited, and betrayed, e.g. by *yes-we-can* slogans that are not meant to actually give people the power that would allow them to do what they can. Every time such popular hopes are torched, they risk turning into their opposite, into anxiety, despair, hopelessness, and resentment. What we need is a dialectical approach to hope that is able to discern between empty hope and founded hope. And here, we are of course again on Bloch's own terrain, his specific combination of "cold stream" analysis and "warm stream" goals and impulses.

Bloch's philosophy needs to be combined with a critical theory of ideological subjection, which would in turn help us to *de-essentialize* his concept of hope.

4. Bloch's anthropological and ontological foundation helps us understand why social emancipation is accompanied and fueled by mass revivals of hopes. One of the most difficult challenges of politics is to understand under what conditions social movements, projects and discourses gain popular appeal and lose it again; set hopes free on a mass scale and disappoint them. Here, it would be fruitful to complement Bloch's philosophy of hope by Gramsci's theory of hegemony, which helps investigate the *conditions* of both hope and hopelessness. For example, the hegemony of neoliberal capitalism manifested itself in a privatization of hope, by which the dreams of a better world became those for oneself and for one's own family (see Thompson 2013, 5). But this de-socialization of hope is not the last word either. As could be observed e.g. in the *Occupy Wall Street* movements or in the electoral campaigns of Jeremy Corbyn and Bernie Sanders, popular upswings on a mass scale can once again shift the force-field for hope.[3] Such a shift can occur when the movement overcomes the neoliberal fragmentations connected to politics of recognition and identitarian silos.

Gramsci has conceptualized such a dynamic with the concept of *catharsis*. It captures the moment when the subaltern classes and groups overcome their egoistical-corporatist restrictions and empower themselves to build alliances with other subaltern classes. For Gramsci, this cathartic moment was so significant that he declared it to be "the star-

3 For a Gramscian analysis of the Occupy movements and the Bernie Sanders Campaign 2016, see Rehmann 2013 and 2016.

ting-point for all the philosophy of praxis". It marks the point where the subaltern classes transition from "objective to subjective" and from "necessity to freedom;" from being a passive "object" of social conditions to becoming an active historical subject (Gramsci 1971, 366-367; Gramsci 1975, 1244). It is in these cathartic moments that hope, whose anthropological and ontological foundations Bloch has so beautifully reconstructed, can emerge concretely. In our neoliberal constellation, hope can be redefined as the cathartic effect of the confluence of dispersed and fragmented subaltern subjects towards a common project of transformation that does not negate its inner contradictions but finds ways to bring them into a productive arrangement.

Referring back to the starting point of my argument, I hope to have shown that the widespread classification of Bloch as a utopian, eschatological, romantic, idealistic, mystical thinker misses both the operative strategy by which he intervened in the contentious force field of contemporary Marxism and the relevance of his philosophy for today's social struggles and movements. The characteristics of Bloch's philosophy can best be deciphered by a praxis-philosophical re-reading that focuses on his specific contribution to the development of both an anticipatory capacity to act and an awareness of open possibilities. But to work with Bloch's philosophy today also requires developing it further. It is in this vein that I propose to reformulate Bloch's "highest good" in terms of a contradictory process of reconciliation. His concept of hope can be de-essentialized by combining it with a critical theory of ideology. Following Bloch's own concept of a "multiverse", his teleological understanding of history is to be pluralized and de-linearized. In particular, Gramsci's theory of hegemony and "catharsis" helps to identify the conditions of both hope and hopelessness, thus opening up Bloch's philosophical foundation to social and political analysis.

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Tytuł: Ernst Bloch jako filozof praktyczny

Abstrakt: Wbrew szeroko rozpowszechnionemu ujęciu filozofii Blocha, w ramach którego określana jest ona jako „mistyczna", „eschatologiczna", „idealistyczna" itd., niniejszy tekst pokazuje, że najlepszą drogą interpretacji tej myśli jest jej interpretacja przez pryzmat marksistowskiej filozofii praktycznej. Podobnie jak Labriola i Gramsci, Bloch rozwija swoje pojęcie materializmu w oparciu o Marksowskie *Tezy o Feuerbachu*. Jego koncepcje „najwyższego dobra" i „techniki sojuszu" podejmują perspektywę pojednania pomiędzy ludźmi i naturą, bliską młodemu Marksowi; jego teoria antycypacji i nadziei skupia się na rozwoju kolektywnych możliwości działania; nawet jego „ontologia jeszcze-nie", często krytykowana za teleologiczność, jest tak naprawdę oparta na pojęciu „otwartych możliwości" i tym samym może być interpretowana w ramach „słabej siły teleologicznej" przynależącej ludzkiej sprawczości. Niemniej jednak z perspektywy praktyczno-filozoficznej widać, że filozofia Blocha musi również zostać przemyślana na nowo w sposób, który uporałby się z jej esencjalistycznymi założeniami i zróżnicowałby jej teleologię.

Słowa kluczowe: antycypacja, hegemonia, nadzieja, ontologia, teleologia

DRITËRO DEMJAHA

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[1] 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

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[2].

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 supressed 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[3] (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)[4]

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[5], 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[6]. 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 19th 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-

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[7] and gives a soteriological emphasis to the postlapsarian exigency of philosophy[8] 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 supressed 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*)[9]. 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[10], 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.

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.

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[11]. 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 Boehmian 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. Regis 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 (*Verwiklichung*, 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 18th 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[12]. 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 revaluation 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 reproach 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 supressed "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.

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.

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

(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[13] 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.

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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Autor: Dritëro Demjaha
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* pokażę, 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

FEDERICO FILAURI

The Mystery of Return: Agamben and Bloch on St. Paul's Parousia and Messianic Temporality

During the last two decades, a sharp re-reading of St. Paul's letters allowed several thinkers to embed a messianic element in their political philosophy. In these readings, the messianic refusal of the world and its laws is understood through the suspensive act of "subtraction" – a movement of withdrawal which nonetheless too often proved ineffective when translated into political practice.

After analysing Agamben's interpretation of subtraction in terms of "inoperativity", this article focuses on the notion of *Parousia* as a key element to understanding his anti-utopian account of messianic time. In contrast to Agamben's reading, Bloch's interpretation of the Pauline *Parousia* envisages the messianic event as infra-historical, but at the same time opened to ultimate (meta-historical) purposes. Bloch's messianic call – I argue – takes the form of mediation, a correction of subtraction towards the direction of a more committed political engagement. I conclude by suggesting that the concrete implementations of this mediation perform their emancipatory function in so far as they assume the character of practical ethics, with the attention directed to the underprivileged and marginalised.

Keywords: Messianic time, parousia, subtraction, Bloch, Agamben

Since the publication of the seminal work of Richard Horsley and other scholars of the Society of Biblical Literature (Horsley 1997), biblical scholars, historians and philosophers concerned with the relationship between religion and politics – between the sacred and mundane spheres – have paid increasing attention to Paul's letters and to his theology (see Heiden, Kooten, and Cimino 2019; Frick 2013). The recent publications in the series *Paul in Critical Contexts*, edited by Augsburg Fortress, provide a striking example of the fertility of the critical re-appropriation of Paul through the lenses of power, gender and ideology. But behind this reappearance of Paul as a prominent figure in rethinking the socio-political space, the pioneering work of Dieter Georgi (Georgi 1964) lays as a milestone, as well as the legendary Heidelberg seminar held by Jacob Taubes in late February 1987, shortly before his death (Taubes 2004), drawing on Georgi's concept of "theocracy" as a source of inspiration. Given the impact that this original reading of Paul has had and the extent of its interconnectedness with the classical works of the Western philosophical tradition, it is not surprising that the peculiar "return to religion", which characterised political philosophy at the turn of the century, was imbued with new readings of Paul's letters.

Most of the political thinkers who have paid heed to Paul's theological categories were concerned with the problems of agency and subjectivity that current Marxism has to face, but they posed them from outside the frame of the "twentieth Century form of Marxism: the relationship between party, class and state" (Roberts 2008b, 96).[1] In these views the *messianic*, the key concept drawn from Pauline Christology, acquires a central role in redefining the space for socialism today, insofar as it enables a "readiness to force the end", or an ability "to act politically for ultimate purposes" (Walzer 1985, 139). Common to those readings are an atheistic approach, a non-historicist philosophy of history and an emphasis on the evenemental character or precipitousness of the political act, whose specific time can be found in the *state of emergency*. But the *messianic* also implies the ultimate attainment of an utterly *new* world – the *Kingdom of God* in Pauline terms – and therefore the refusal of *this* world and of the enforced laws that are ruling it. This transition from the old to the new world, whereby the *messianic* finds its proper temporal and spatial collocation, ought to be marked – if we follow the readings of e.g. Žižek, Badiou or Agamben – by an act or

1 See for example Žižek (2000) and Badiou (2003); Agamben (2005) discusses the notion of class but only to distance himself from it, consistent with other works (see Agamben 2003).

movement of subtraction which also informs a correspondent political vision.

The category of subtraction was firstly envisaged by Badiou, aiming to escape the suffocating grip of the state (Hallward 2003, 98), perceived as the "objective and violent core of legal domination" (Hallward 2003, 98). Subtraction finds its place, according to Badiou, between two other modes of negation of the current socio-political-economic structure, *destruction* and *communication* (Hallward 2003, 272). The first refers to the disintegration of an old world – the bourgeois state – via a violent and frontal opposition to it: in short, to class struggle possibly bursting into a revolution; the second, on the contrary, is an attempt at negating the current framework without its annihilation and takes the forms of the democratic opposition to which we have become accustomed (Badiou 2007). While the first movement entails the risk of slipping into an authoritarian form of the exertion of power – personified by Stalin's dictatorship – (Hallward 2003, 273) the second results in a fictitious opposition that never achieves the aimed goal: the outcome is a death of negation and political hope, which leads to despair (Badiou 2007). An alternative and not (only) destructive form of negation has to be sought in the indifference to past laws, in the suspension of the political structure, namely: in *subtracting* the subject from the framework of a normal state (Badiou 2007). If we maintain that the *reality* of the socio-economic-political structure ultimately lays on the categorial distinctions that build up logical norms and substantial predicates, the act of subtraction consists, in the first instance, in a withdrawal from *reality* and in appeal to the *real* that does not find any suitable representation there. In other words, this movement is the "infinite subtraction from the subsumption of the multiple beneath the One of the concept" (Badiou 2004, 108). Through a break with the objective structures – namely from social and historical particularities – subtraction acts as a subjective gesture performed as a non-consensual "politics of truth" reviving ideas of justice and equality (Chattopadhyay 2011). This movement of disentanglement from legal, gender, ethnic, class, etc. identities produces the *generic*, disregarding all predicates and therefore producing the universal.[2] As the act of subtraction must be "devoid of any aim that would be representable in the object or supported by a principle of objectivity" (Badiou 2004, 112), it can be described, *mutatis mutandis*, as an attempt at thinking a form of being deprived of the Aristotelian *entelechy*.

2 It is here worth noticing the affinity of the generic with the *quodlibet*, the in-essential subject of Agamben's coming community (Agamben 2003).

The transfer of this movement from the theoretical elaboration to the sphere of action implies in fact the imperative of a refusal to interact with any structure that entails a political identity without necessarily obliterating it, but rather suspending or eluding it. Practices of passive resistance, strikes, squatting, etc. are among the most common translations of the act of subtraction to the field of political action but have not proved successful in curbing the hegemony of the capitalist economy and the state as its counterpart.

Practices of passive resistance, strikes, squatting, etc. are among the most common translations of the act of subtraction to the field of political action but have not proved successful in curbing the hegemony of the capitalist economy and the state as its counterpart.

The eventual ineffectiveness of such practices leads to questioning the emancipatory potential of the subtractive interpretation of the *messianic*. In analysing Žižek's, Badiou's and Agamben's interpretations, John Roberts raises the problematic status of their account of messianic time and its engendered political implications:

> The subtractive, renunciative, and suspensive conditions of the political subject are the necessary (but not sufficient) conditions for clearing a distance between what might be named as revolutionary politics and the day-to-day "democratic" representation of politics under mature capitalism. (Roberts 2008b, 101)

The exodus from identity politics in the attempt to re-build an opposition to the current economic-political structures is what Roberts refers to when he talks about the "subtractive, renunciative, and suspensive conditions of the political subject", acknowledging the ineffectiveness of their corresponding practices. This limit raises the following question – which seems to have become even more pressing in the last few years: if the politics of subtraction is only the *necessary* condition, what would be *sufficient* to endow the political subject with the capacity to erode capitalism's dominance and overturn its power?

To answer this question, this paper will discuss one account of political subtraction, namely Giorgio Agamben's "inoperativity", as presented in his text *The Time That Remains* via the reading of the Pauline concept of *Parousia*. This theoretical approach to politics will be linked to the *messianic* conception of time as expounded in the same text, pointing out the weak and passive forms of political (in)activity entailed in this framework. This paper will then move from the interpretation of the same figure contained in the Pauline letters – the *Parousia* – proposed by Ernst Bloch, showing the eschatological afflatus in his *messianic* temporality. Bloch's framework enables on the one hand to avoid any imposition of identity on the political subject, and on the other to engage with the real in terms of "mediation", where the ultimate goal is envisioned as acting in the historical *hic et nunc*. The paper will finally

suggest that the Blochian peculiar future-oriented temporality – eventually lying on his ontology of not-yet being – is one of the places where the *sufficient* condition to address the current impelling political demands of the underprivileged and the marginalised can be sought.

Inoperativity, or Agamben's subtractive politics

The concept of inoperativity (*inoperosità*) is central to Agamben's entire work and arguably the core of his entire production from *Homo Sacer* on. In fact, the philosopher reaches the point of equating the political sphere to inoperativity *tout court*: "Politics is that which corresponds to the essential inoperativity (*inoperosità*) of humankind, to the radical being-without-work of human communities" (Agamben 2000b, 141–42). Agamben, moving from a Foucauldian perspective, maintains that biopolitical apparatuses (states, nations, etc.) exert their power directly on the living body of the subjected individuals, not only setting their tasks but also disciplining their acts by forcibly directing them towards predetermined goals. This control over the bodies takes place, for Agamben, in the form of steering them as *a means to an end*, thus denying the very essence of humankind, namely the absence of a determinate essence. By severing the co-opting linkage between potentiality and actuality, by negating a plain *transitus de potentia ad actus* (Agamben 1998, 62), Agamben seeks to restore man to the dimension of pure potentiality, that is, the free choice to be or not to be in a determinate status. This freedom, however, takes place not so much *qua* the possibility to pass into actuality as the possibility of his own impossibility: the capacity *not to* do something, *not to* fulfil his assigned task, *not to* be a determinate being. This capability, inherent to human beings, is thus properly restored in an act of subtraction, which Agamben names inoperativity and which constitutes the political act par excellence. As Prozorov notes:

> For Agamben, the way to bring things to the end consists neither in the teleological fulfilment of a process of development (the end as completion or accomplishment) nor in the merely negative act of the destruction or elimination of an object (the end as completion or accomplishment) […]. Instead, it is the process of becoming or rendering something *inoperative*, deactivating its functioning in the apparatus and making it available for free use. Happy life is thus made possible by neutralizing the multiple apparatuses of power to which we are subjected, including our own identities formed within them. (Prozorov 2014, 31)

The negation of the identitarian construction of the political subject, together with the deactivation of the apparatuses which seize its living body, are the two dynamics which subtract men from the control over their life and re-enable a free use of the body itself, no longer forced to accomplish a given task. Prozorov suggests (Prozorov 2014, 33) that this act of subtraction might find its counterpart in the political praxis of the Italian Autonomist Marxist movement in the late 1970s. However, it would be more accurate to refer, as Stefano Franchi does, to the theorisations of Mario Tronti, which during the 1960s laid the background for "workerism" and provided the theoretical ideas for the subsequent autonomist movements. Workerists claimed that since

> capital is essentially a social power that requires, as a prerequisite, the existence of productive labor [...] a withdrawal from labor, or more generally, a refusal to collaborate with capital in the organization of labor by presenting, for instance, demands that cannot be satisfied, is a political "act" of destruction that would bring down the capitalist organization of society. Politics becomes passive in the sense that canonical form of Marxist political action, the workers" struggle against capital, is identified with a denial of any action at all, as Mario Tronti declared in "The Strategy of refusal". (Franchi 2004, 38; see Tronti 2019)

Behind these ideas there was a series of practices of insubordination and sabotage which spread and radicalised in factories, until their explosion in the autumn of 1969: the rejection of work was conceived as a unifying practice of struggle as it implemented a refusal of the obligation to produce surplus value. Proletarian expropriations, self-reductions of bills and rents, and squatting, were among the practices gravitating around the concept of the refusal to work. As Franchi points out, a "thematic affinity" between the workerist framework and Agamben's inoperativity is somewhat striking, since Agamben reaches similar conclusions from a philosophical standpoint almost entirely alien to the Marxist conceptual system (Franchi 2004, 38).

The capacity *not to* work, to refuse any allegiance with the biopolitical machine, depends not so much on the disregard for the assigned end as on the intrinsic absence of any end itself. Human beings are, for Agamben, inherently devoid of any determinate identity, and there is therefore no *telos* in their life apart from that which has been imposed upon them by the apparatuses of power. As a consequence, inextricably bound up with the essential inoperativity of human beings, there must be a conception of time deprived of any orientation to a future goal – namely, an anti-teleological conception of time. Were human activity

directed to an end – even the utopian end of liberating humanity from the constraints of the biopolitical power –, a person's acts would be helplessly trapped in the net of teleology and so eventually of identity politics. The exclusion of any utopian projection into the future from Agamben's political philosophy has been well described by Carlo Salzani:

> Radical politics is usually based on imagining that something very different from his world is possible and that the possibilities of this new world lie in the future. To start all over, though, implies a *de-cision*, the drawing of lines and demarcations between the old and the new, the past and the future, and the violence that goes with it. For Agamben, to the contrary, it is in this world, in the present, that we have to uncover the potentialities for the new world, a supplementary world that exists already, in potential. [...] And this implies rendering inoperative [...] all historical and utopian projects. Redemption is not opera, work, but, rather, a peculiar sort of sabbatical vacation from all the communities of the future, from everything about the future that demands a production, from all the demands of the future. (Salzani 2012, 227)

Agamben's political thought is then characterised by the sheer absence of any new world, of any utopia which has just not yet been fulfilled. It is rather to the present – devoid of any assigned new *telos* – that political thought and action are directed. However, conceiving a political philosophy denuded of any *future* end does not entail the lack of a reference to the *past*, which on the contrary plays a crucial role. In this regard – as well as with respect to the critique of violence (see Liska 2009) – Agamben follows the lead of Benjamin appropriating some of the key concepts of the Benjaminian philosophy of history and messianic time (see Hegarty 2010, 25). Although a thorough analysis of the relation between the two thinkers lies beyond the scope of this paper, it is worth mentioning Agamben's arguably most relevant source in terms of furnishing a background for understanding his messianic conception of time. Only after having done that will we discuss the link between inoperativity and messianic time.

Agamben: *Parousia* as Presence

Walter Benjamin is without doubt one of the main thinkers of the last century who tried to locate politics in fidelity to the messianic event (Martel 2011; Khatib 2013). Inheriting Benjamin's capacity to shift between a variety of fields and disciplines (see Borsò et al. 2010), Agam-

ben has more than any other who has contributed to the recent Pauline revival explicitly followed Benjamin's lead. However, the reference to some of the key texts of the latter shows a re-elaboration of Benjamin's accounts of messianism and history, which are twisted in the direction of inoperativity.

In his book on the apostle, Agamben traces three parallels between Paul and Benjamin making the latter almost an heir of the Pauline bequest. The first similarity is to be found in the second thesis on history (Benjamin 2010). Agamben tracks down what seems to be a hidden citation: Benjamin affirms that a weak messianic force (*eine schwache messianische Kraft*) has been given to us – and this closely resembles Paul affirming that his power is fulfilled in his weakness – and in Luther's translation we find both the words "*schwache*" and "*Kraft*".[3] This weak messianic power is for Agamben the quintessence of the politics of subtraction or inoperativity, which finds its proper time in the moment of the *Jetzt-Zeit*, the famous concept developed by Benjamin. The second parallel is that between the *Jetzt-Zeit* and the Pauline insistence on *ho nyn kairós*, the time of now, which designates messianic time. This is the instant when a cut in the *continuum* is made and a disconnection from the homogenous fabric of time is established. The third parallel is finally to be found in the concept of image: in Paul the great moments of the past are collected and summarized in a *typos* – in Luther: *Bild* – which creates the relation between those moments and the present messianic time. In Benjamin the convergence of past and present happens precisely in an image which dialectically determines a constellation (see Benjamin 1999, 463; Benjamin 1998, 29).

These three aspects of Benjamin's notion of messianic time structure Agamben's Pauline political theology in so far as they help him in shaping the relation between inoperativity and present time. There is no doubt that weakness is central to Benjamin's messianism as well but, as Werner Hamacher has explained, here it takes on two different meanings. Firstly, since the "*weak* messianic force" has been "endowed" to us (Benjamin 2007, 254), this force "is not one that is our own […] something that we have at disposal by our own means, […] it is not an ability that springs from ourselves" (Hamacher 2001, 165). Secondly, "it has to become extinguished in each future in which it is not perceived or actualised" (Hamacher 2001, 165): this force has to be grasped in the

3 It has been noted that the stress on the weakness of the messianic force could well be linked more to Hermann Cohen than to Paul himself (Deuber-Mankowsky 2008).

time of now or else it vanishes – and weakness is its most important trait as it indicates "the susceptibility, on principle, to its failure" (Hamacher 2001, 168). Agamben appropriates the Benjaminian framework – which entails a linkage between a *past* generation that has granted to the *present* one this messianic force – thus adopting the bond of messianic time and weak messianic force, but reads this *weakness* as the intrinsic absence of *telos* in any human act. In this way, he connects inoperativity (the only possible character of mankind that keeps it open to possibility) to the messianic "time that remains" (the only time at our disposal). It has to be noted, however, that while in Benjamin the "secret agreement between the past and the present one" is expressed in the wait for redemption – an irruption into human history, which catastrophically poses an end to it – in Agamben this is turned into forms of suspensive political practices that are already implementable. In this alteration of the Benjaminian *weak* messianic force, this latter belongs to the present generation: it only needs to be put into practice by deactivating the machine, by erasing any reference to a future happy status as a goal to achieve. Thus, Agamben slightly tweaks Benjamin's weak messianic force, making this task of clearing all tasks the main act to fulfil in the present time. This latter is the Pauline *ho nyn kairós*, the time of now, the proper messianic time, which now has to be analysed.

In his description of messianic time, Agamben emphasizes its proper connotation, differentiating it from ordinary present time (the continuous sequence of identical moments, one subsequent to the other), but also from apocalyptical and from eschatological time. While apocalyptic time is the end of time, the very moment – foreseen by the prophets – in which history comes to an end (and in this sense it overlaps with eschatological time as the last time), messianic time must find its place in the very present of the apostolate (Agamben 2000, 63). Thus, messianic time is not a transitional time, between the present and eschatological time, but rather a contraction of the present moment. It is the shrinking of time itself, a recollection of all the moments of the past in a single moment, in so far as the possibilities embedded in past events can be actualised in the now, and in this actualisation find real redemption. Agamben argues in favour of a dialectical representation of time: not present, nor past nor future, but rather a cut or a remainder inside the continuum of time, engendering an intimate disconnection within the fabric of time itself. In this dialectical representation, the messianic event is split into resurrection (the messianic event properly speaking) and *Parousia* (the second coming of Jesus as accomplishment of messianic time). But Agamben stresses the etymological meaning of *Parousia,*

para-ousia i.e. the act of being aside or being present (Agamben 2000a, 70) and therefore overturns the concept of the delayed second coming of Christ – which permeates the entire Christian eschatological tradition, and its history as well (Taubes 2009, 56). Thus the promise of Christ being present is not relegated to a future "age to come" because this latter has already begun thanks to the messianic event of the resurrection: the task of the faithful is no more that of waiting for the *realised eschatology* at the end of times, but to prepare themselves in the present moment, the *inaugurated eschatology* (see Hooker 2004; Roberts 2008a, 70).

To characterise the realised eschatology that takes place in the shrinking time of now, Agamben looks at the peculiar movement of *recapitulation*. In this contraction of time which leads toward the end, each and every thing, profane as well as divine, is taken up again and finds its proper place: a *recapitulation* (ἀνακεφαλαίωσις) of the entire past. The totality of all the past moments is in fact necessary for the attainment of the *pleroma* (πλήρωμα), the fullness of time (Agamben 2000a, 75), which is the core of the messianic promise. Not a single moment can get lost if the final redemption has to be finally realised: not a single potentiality can be wasted. Paradoxically, however, it is in the act of deactivation and clearing of all tasks, that this potentiality is preserved and even restored to its utter capacity – the possibility not to act. This is done through Agamben's reading of the Pauline notion of *katargesis* (κατάργησις) as a process of deactivation and fulfilment of the law at the same time (Agamben 2000a, 94). Only by means of a κατάργησις – only by rendering inoperative the law – can the totality of the past possibilities come to actuality and thus contribute to the fullness of time, which encompasses the fulfilment of the law as well; this contribution requires the recapitulation of these past moments and takes place in the present messianic time.

It is finally evident how this latter bears the mark of inoperativity: the accomplishment of the promise of the fullness of all time is realised through the act of suspension and deactivation, realised in the "time that remains". This way Agamben is able to read Paul's "time of now" in terms of an anti-utopian stance, since there is no need to wait for a future world to come, given that after the messianic event – after Christ's resurrection – we entered a time of *inaugurated eschatology* and therefore, as Salzani observes, "it is in this world, in the present, that we have to uncover the potentialities for the new world, a supplementary world that exists already, in potential" (Salzani 2012, 227). And the "time of now" is anti-utopian in so far as it is anti-teleological, that is,

it rejects all the ends forcibly assigned to man and frees him as a pure means. The cut of messianic time acts as a suspension of the machine; it does not destroy it but rather renders it inoperative and allows all the possibilities, which in the past have been negated to be finally freely expressed.

Here it also becomes clear the extent to which Benjamin's framework informs Agamben's reading of Paul's messianism. It is precisely in the nexus of past-fulfilment-deactivation that Benjaminian messianic nihilism becomes more evident – and particularly in two points. In first instance, as in Benjamin, in Paul messianic time in fact shows the same two-fold structure – the two faces of the dialectical image, seized in the moment, are directed towards present and past:

> The messianic is not a third aeon between two times, it is, rather, a cut that divides the same division of times, introducing a remainder between them, an indifference zone in which the past is dislocated into the present and the present is spread out into the past. (Salzani 2012, 74)

The proper form of the *time that remains*, the present time, entails a deep connection of present and past. Secondarily, the accomplishment of the messianic promise in the *Parousia* takes the form of a suspensive practice of which the *anomia* (the absence or deactivation of the law) is the only possible implementation. In this sense, messianic time is precisely the place where the Pauline principle "*hos me*" – literally: "as if not" – can be practised. The apostle invites the Corinthians to *make use of* the world as if they do not use it (1 Corinthians 7:29-31). This is precisely the point where the Benjaminian "*s c h w a c h e messianische Kraft*", turned by Agamben into the essentially inoperative character of humankind, manifests itself in its utmost political meaning. It is not by *owning* the things of the world but by *making use* of them that man fulfils his nature: not within a despotic relation of possession, but rather by the free use of things – and of the bodies in first instance – the "coming community" takes place.

To sum up, the messianic cut of present time is realised through a recollection of every single past event in the very present moment. This burden requires a suspension of the laws, a de-legitimation of the current order, and the subsequent opening up of the real state of exception. In other words, in messianic time, located between time and its end, the messianic remainder and its weak force breaks the continuity and evokes the past, making it possible to suspend, deactivate, and make inoperative the devices of law and power. It has to be incidentally noted

In Agamben's reading, we can find only half of the potentiality of the Pauline principle, only the side of the past. And as a result, we get the possibility to suspend or deactivate the biopolitical machine but not to go further in reassembling a subject on the left.

that this is not an example of a weak messianicity in the sense of deconstruction: there is no infinite deferment of the attainment of a result. On the contrary, the call for action takes place here and now, but it is a call for subtraction as the proper embodiment of the messianic spirit. In Agamben's reading, we can find only half of the potentiality of the Pauline principle, only the side of the past. And as a result, we get the possibility to suspend or deactivate the biopolitical machine but not to go further in reassembling a subject on the left.

Bloch: *Parousia* as Future

Reading Paul as a herald of passive politics, however, is neither the first nor the only option that has been explored by thinkers who placed the messianic wager on the table of radical politics. By turning the attention to Ernst Bloch, this paper will now explore his original reading of the Scripture, showing how he interpreted the Pauline *Parousia*, recovering the eschatological potential of this notion according to his conception of messianic time.

While in the last twenty years we have witnessed a tightening of the connection between politics and religion, Ernst Bloch could be seen as a forerunner of this tendency. He dealt with religious topics and issues from his early works – and notably in the first edition of *Geist der Utopie* there were already many chiliastic, messianic and gnostic elements (Münster 1982), which contributed to Bloch's sketch of a rich utopian imagination. But while it is true that in the first three decades of the last century this tendency was shared by a lot of radical thinkers, especially German-Jewish ones (Löwy 1992), it is interesting to note that the influence of religion in Bloch's works remained firm also during the 1950s and the 1960s, after his acquisition of a Marxist standpoint (Hudson 1982).[4] The importance of religion probably even grew after 1961, when he moved to West Germany, after several conflicts with the orthodox Marxist environment of Leipzig, and after he came into contact with the prolific environment of the Tübingen theologians.

Here he tried to enforce a connection – not to say an alliance – between different sources, aimed at similar or even identical political aspirations. The combination of Marxism and Christianity takes shape

4 Cunico (2003) shows how it is possible to detect a materialistic turn in Bloch's production already in 1926; the complete maturation of his Marxism would take place in the 1930s, while working at his *Logos der Materie*, published posthumously by Cunico himself.

in the context of Bloch's interpretive inheritance of religious ideas, developed in his *Principle of Hope*, but it finds its full application only in his late work *Atheism in Christianity*, written in the Tubingen years and published in 1968. Bloch idiomatically summarised it in this brief but impressive claim:

> Implicit in Marxism – as the leap from the Kingdom of Necessity to that of Freedom – there lies the whole so subversive and un-static heritage of the Bible. (Bloch 2009a, 57)

Bloch thinks of a possible fruitful reading of the holy texts in terms of a heritage, which has its own method. This process resembles a precision cutting which goes through the Scripture and produces a division between the regressive material – which must be left aside and firmly denounced and opposed – and a progressive part, which must be inherited. This "cut" is intended as a heretical exegetical work on the text that aims to discover and exhume the

> underground Bible, both infra and contra and ultra the heteronomous light of the theocratic firmament; criticism has made investigation of it possible. [And this is the] real Biblia Pauperum, which had the intention, against Baal, of "overthrowing every state of affairs in which man appears to be oppressed, despised and forgotten in his very being". (Bloch 2009a, 69)

But when it comes to reading the Letters of Saint Paul, Bloch's reading fails to fully acknowledge the potentially progressive elements of Paul's theology. His reading remains informed by the "dominant history of occidental Pauline interpretation, especially after the emperor Constantine set in motion a history that would convert the Roman Empire to Christianity and to conform Christianity to the empire" (Kahl 2010, 4). As a result, Bloch insistently criticises "Paul's doctrine of sacrificial death" and Paul's allegedly

> destructive work; for its aim was to break the subversive element in the Bible once and for all, with the myth of the victim Lamb. It was to be a sanction for the so-called patience of the Cross – so praiseworthy an attitude in the oppressed, so comfortable for the oppressors; a sanction, too, for absolute and unconditional obedience to authority, as coming from God. (Bloch 2009a, 161)

In other words, Bloch charges Paul with having turned every attempt made by a theology of hope to change and modify this world into a conformist and eventual passive attitude, as attested by chapter thirteen

of the Letter to Romans, where Paul commands: "Let every person be subject to the governing authorities" (Romans 13, 1).

Despite Bloch's harsh – and now perhaps old-fashioned – criticism of the apostle, he is able to pronounce a "yet" and to stress another crucial aspect of Pauline theology. In fact, Bloch acknowledges that the announcement of the resurrection unveils a potent image of incorruptibility, through the idea of Baptism in the death of Christ (Bloch 2009a, 161–62). This idea, namely that we who have died in Adam, will be made alive in Christ, reveals for Bloch a kind of gateway through death, which in Bloch's philosophy is deemed to be the anti-utopia *par excellence*. The announcement of the resurrection event proclaimed by the apostle conveys the first joyful wish-mysterium, "unempirical and speculative", as Bloch puts it.

To describe the role played by this powerful image, Bloch uses the term *Leitbild*, a guiding-image (Bloch 1996a, 3:930–34). This is a figuration, aesthetic or religious, aimed to indicate the ultimate goal, to set (and maintain) the right direction and to inspire hope and courage for action. Bloch describes its function as follows:

> Paul's doctrine about Christ, based on an anti-death mystique […] was in effect an effective force against the phobia of nihilism, which had just then begun to show itself in late antiquity. It was a Tribune of humanity, sent out against the hardest of all forms of anti-Utopianism that we encounter in our present supremely heteronomous world: sent out in the face of death. (Bloch 2009a, 162)

Together with the resurrection, there are two other wish mysteries, both drawn from Paul's Letters: the Ascension and the *Parousia*. The meaning of the Ascension has to be found on the basis of the movement made by Christ. Bloch reads this rising up from a terrestrial place into heavens as a representation of an irruption or bursting into the on-high (Bloch 2009a, 162). Thus, this movement conveys the sense of a *usurpation*, committed by Jesus, the son of man, against the Lord, and now the private sanctuary of God has been transformed into the heavenly Jerusalem by Jesus as the *liberator* of people.

The third mystery is the *Parousia*. Bloch does not distance himself from the traditional interpretation of this mystery as the Second Coming of Jesus, a Return after the ascension: he, the son of man or the Lord who rejected Lordship, was not only expected to dare the Heavens but also to come back. And in this return Jesus is acting as the Avenger. In fact, he is the redeemer and comes back to bring redemption, but the Hebraic word for redemption is *Go'el*, the primary meaning of which

refers to the closest relative and heir of a murdered person, who has the duty to avenge their death (Bloch 2009a, 100). In Bloch's words:

> He appears now, however, more as the Avenger of Job as the preacher of the Sermon on the mount. Only for the labourers and heavy-laden, the degraded and despised, will the Second Coming be a mild one: only for those who are more than prepared for it. (Bloch 2009a, 166)

According to Bloch, the *Parousia* has a triple meaning. In first instance, it is no more than a mere reversal: the lowly will be exalted and the mighty brought low – so the old power structure is maintained and the only difference is that instead of the ancient Lord now we find the heavenly power of Christ, son of God. But beyond this a second meaning appears: Christ's love for the oppressed is the counterpart of the justice invoked for the evil-doers and salvation for those who have been liberated. In this way the old despotic order is wiped out by the return, and only love describes the relationship within the community. Here the third and most important meaning of the *Parousia* is revealed, as it is indicated in the book of the Apocalypse. In this setting, the Return concerns the anthropocentric image of the heavenly Jerusalem – a utopian image – which was to come down to men. The striking point in this depiction, according to Bloch, is that of a city in which the human and messianic figure of Jesus has taken over the old image of God, master of the worlds of sun and moon, as if to say that the human world, made by horizontal relations within the community, has taken the place of the vertical submission of the world to the ruling power of God – or of the King, his delegate. In this way the *Parousia* is not just a mystery juxtaposed to the other two, but it determines their final accomplishment. If the resurrection shines a light in the darkness of death and ascension represents man daring to usurp the Heavens, only in the *return* – the final realisation of the city of man – is all this tension finally released.

The focus on the mystery of return within the economy of the book is mainly aimed at supporting one of Bloch's key arguments, namely that the prime and most noteworthy title of Christ is "son of man", instead of the later and cultic title of "son of God", to which much of the developments of the history of the church is related – the church of the Lords, of course. The *Parousia*, the second coming of Christ, here serves to debunk this reading by presenting an anthropocentric – and thus anti-despotic – image of the city to come, illuminated by the Lamb. Nonetheless, it must be noted that it is not an accident that the doctrine

of the second coming, the synthesis and peak of the progressive elements of the wish-mysteries – and so the bulk of the religious heritage – has its place in future time: this has much to do with the Blochian account of messianic temporality. In fact, the *Parousia* must be waited for, invoked, and prepared.

Bloch's eschatology

Understanding the *Parousia* as the Second Coming, Bloch, unlike Agamben, stresses the eschatological and apocalyptic load of this potent image, placing it in a future, desirable time. Messianic time is for Bloch tightly intertwined with the apocalyptic, and therefore stretched towards the future possibility of a "meta-history", the *locus* of the "New Jerusalem at the 'end of time'" (Bloch 1975, 96). This cryptic passage from *Experimentum Mundi*, his last published work, is not the only one where Bloch tries to describe the ultimate future time in which the realisation of utopia has to find its place. However, the presence of an eschatological tension inside the Blochian philosophy should not mislead us when analysing his account of temporality.

There are several passages in Bloch's early works, especially the *Spirit of Utopia*, where the eschatological tension generated by the future utopian world is intensified to the vision of a global catastrophe involving all humanity and its world (see *inter alia* Bloch 2009b, 197). In this context, the eschatological focus seems to make the apocalyptic event take on the meaning of the *end of history*, or at least the end of the current aeon – along with all its worldly features. It is easy to see that this is a deeply problematic representation of the *eschaton*, since it is not clear *when* it is supposed to happen, under *what conditions*, and *how* this great event of *apokatastasis* is envisioned.

In a different reading, the *eschaton* could be interpreted as a *Grenzbegriff*, a limit-concept, or as a Kantian regulative idea, thus transforming it into the *telos* of a traditional teleology (see Mendes-Flohr 1983, 644). In so doing the *final* event is rethought as a *final aim* towards which people should orientate themselves throughout their historical journey, but without ever touching this ultimate goal. In this view, the movement and action of humanity in history is destined to be a game structured as an infinite progress, lacking any concrete satisfying prize to grasp.

Within the traditional conception of eschatology only a fixed teleology is possible: the final goal is given in advance and history becomes

the process of longing for it. This framework entails an essentialist conception of the *eschaton*, where it is already defined at the very beginning of the historical process. Thus, the final aim for which humankind strives is pictured as a pre-determined ideal, either ungraspable (a limit concept which leads the progressive path of history) or seizable in a structured organisation of society and human relations. In other words, this *eschaton* is an *essence* whose attributes are already given, and the moment in which it comes to existence is nothing but a *fact* which takes place (or is only awaited) at a certain point in history. This essence can belong as much to a determinate kind of perfect society as to a determined development of human capabilities. A philosophy of history of this kind can only be paired with a close system of thought which risks on the one hand leading to a totalitarian political system – the only one that conforms to that utopic ideal – and, on the other, allowing the reproduction of biopolitical power over people in a disguised form of democracy that claims to pursue that ideal itself. In both cases, the *eschaton* acts as the central gear of the theological-political machine.

Rather than thinking of the eschatological element as a *fact* or as an *essence* – which is either to be found at the end of history or in the intelligible world of regulative ideas – I argue that it is possible to interpret it as a *function*. And this *function* operates not from outside history, attracting it to a pre-formed end-goal or determining its catastrophic end, but from inside history, and precisely in the very core of it: the present moment, the *Augenblick*. This moment, albeit similar to the *Jetztzeit* of Benjamin and Agamben, is indeed only the beginning of a wider present moment: it is through the mediation with the current tendencies that this punctual and instantaneous moment is expanded into the "temporal work-field of the front of the process" (Mendes-Flohr 1983, 87). And the peculiarity of such a moment is that it is stretched towards the future, rather than recollecting the past. In *The Principle of Hope* the *Augenblick* is described as bi-facial, with one side directed to the very present instant, when the impulse to escape from a deprived situation leads towards a decision and to action, and the other side points to the future, the "Ultimum of the content" (Bloch 1996b, 298), as Bloch puts it. In other words,

> Every lived moment would therefore, if it had eyes, be a witness of the beginning of the world which begins in it time and time again; *every moment, when it has not emerged, is in the year zero of the beginning of the world*. The beginning occurs in it time and time again for as long as it takes until the undefined Not of the That-ground is decided, through the experimental definitions of the world-

> -process and its forms, either as definite Nothing or definite All, according to its content; *every moment therefore likewise potentially contains the date of the completion of the world and the data of its content*. (Bloch 1996b, 308)

And even more explicitly: "That which is at work within it [the moment], after it has emerged from its immediacy, finds itself and everything at first as future" (Bloch 1975, 90).[5] These two sides – *mediated* present and ultimate future – are inseparable and together build up the elementary unity of the Blochian account of temporality. Insofar as the *Parousia*, the Second Coming awaited at the *eschaton*, is placed in a desired ultimate future, this wish-mystery performs its proper function *precisely inside* the *Augenblick*, at the core of the present. The last times, the end of history, from this new standpoint, take on a different "location": they act inside the lived moment, where through their specific weight they play their role of orienting the present decision towards the intentioned direction.

No matter what *essence* or *fact* can be implied in the image of the *Parousia*, it is possible to approach and inherit this Pauline doctrine as an intra-historical operator. In fact, despite its depiction of a distant future time, it fulfils its function in the most advanced section of human history, at its *front*, right inside the moment in which the decision is taken to fight for a possible better world. And its function is precisely that of *averting the closure of the system*, which is to say preventing a provisional outcome, gained during the process, from being traded for the ultimate goal. In brief, forbidding a reification of any achieved result. The eschatological function in Bloch is thus not a mere operation which from an input produces an output, but rather an element that, according to its etymology (from Latin: *functionem*, *fungere*), acts, operates, works. It instils a teleological tension in the historical process, but thinking the *telos* of a non-fixed teleology, i.e. a telos which can be continually rearranged and freely modified throughout the process, through "experimental definitions" of its form and content. This is the utopian role of the ultimate goal – and the *Parousia* image is its harbinger.

Mediation

In the Blochian structure of messianic time, therefore, the present moment keeps its crucial role, being indeed at the core of the pulsating

5 „Das in ihm Treibende findet, nachdem es als seinem Unmittelbaren herausgetreten ist, sich und alles zuerst als Zukunft".

subject who enacts the transformation of the real. In this sense, messianic time can be described as the intimate disconnection of the fabric of time, an exceptional time that allows us to exit the stream of ordinary, mundane historical events – in this regard Bloch is very similar to what we find in Agamben. But where the Pauline *Kairós* for Agamben is the moment of the recapitulation of the past, for Bloch it is the instant of the future-oriented decision. Instead of a recollection of past events which can be redeemed in every single moment, Bloch insists on the liberation of the "future embedded in the past", of the *Spannung*, the tension accumulated in the past (Bloch 1975, 92). While for Agamben, who follows Benjamin in this aspect, the totality of the past comes to be suddenly redeemed in the present instant, Bloch's decision operates a cut through the past and unlocks only the progressive content which has not yet been expressed, discarding the crust (i.e.: social and political institutions) that trapped it. Where Agamben stresses the suspension of the current system(s) of domination, Bloch highlights the possibility to awaken and stir the forces which, although paralysed by previous events, are still enclosed in the pattern of history.

Where Agamben stresses the suspension of the current system(s) of domination, Bloch highlights the possibility to awaken and stir the forces which, although paralysed by previous events, are still enclosed in the pattern of history.

In the closed historical-material process, this embedded content exerts a pressure in the direction of progressive development – or, in Bloch's terms, a *Tendenz* towards the ultimate goal – that opens a window in the historical process into its exceedance. But, again, this extra-historical plan must not be thought of as a supersensible ulteriority, which would be a mere fictional duplication of reality, nor a completely other epoch, which would be only a repetition of this time. Rather, it refers to a peculiar modality of human behaviour, which has to be adopted in order to pursue the social and political goal of a renovated world. "Staying in history as if we did not" (De Martino 2015) – this is probably the best motto to describe such a mode of behaviour: determining, in every *Augenblick*, the discrepancy between what there is and what there should be. Here the Pauline motto *hos me* as the proper approach to the messianic time emerges again. But in this case, contrary to Agamben, the extra-historical positioning allowed by messianic time does not entail the suspensive or deactivating character of political action. Rather than a subtractive practice, Bloch suggests an even more engaged commitment towards the current political situation.

In regard to what can be called with Roberts "a position of 'weakness' and disengagement" (Roberts 2008, 95), adopting a Blochian perspective would entail a readjustment of the Pauline *hos me*: the latter would take the meaning of acting in a non-identitarian or non-essentialistic way *within* the current political structures. Mediation, taken in this

meaning, is not an act opposite to that of subtraction. However, while this latter consists in a withdrawal from *reality* in search for a *real* conceived as a gap, a fracture or a tear in the impervious social fabric, mediation thinks of the *real* as a force capable of trickling forth through the inevitably porous fabric of *reality*. As a result, mediation calls for bursting in and subverting from inside the legal, gender, ethnic, etc. structures, rather than sneaking outside of them and acting in a supposed suspension of their hegemony, as subtractive politics too often risks hinting at. The movement of mediation can be thus seen as a slight correction or necessary complement to that of subtraction: without renouncing the *entelechy*, without abdicating to the imagination of the (utopian) goal of restructuring the social and political environment, but thinking its predicates in a non-teleological way, always kept open to further rearrangements – in short, thinking its being as not-yet-being. Only in this way is it possible to conceive of the *Parousia* not only as something that has to be awaited, but also as an event that we are actively preparing.

Yet what is *Parousia* but the potent image in which ancient Christians had faith? It is clearly not the same *Leitbild*, that which can be effective today, since the image of a divine saviour effectively acting in history does not attract believers as it used to. Nonetheless the hope for the second coming – the wait for a redemption which leads to a future better world – can still be theological-politically relevant, if we are able to detect the same systematic structure that lays behind a religious principle and its secularised counterpart. At the same time, a new image has to be found – an image which is clear, potent and reminds us what humanity is and what is not. It is perhaps to the touching image of a refugee who was saved from drowning in the Mediterranean Sea, or to the persecuted stranger defended from racist attacks in the outskirts of our cities that we can turn our sight. Though not directly religiously connotated, both these glimpses carry the unprovable truth – an *axiom of truth*, in Badiou's words – that only a theological principle could sustain. What is active in these images is a postulate of a practical ethics. Bloch uses the term "radical natural law" to indicate this set of postulates anchored on an unconstructable core of a "real human dignity" (Bloch 1986, chapter 22): a moral axiom whose Marxian claim reads "From each according to his ability, to each according to his needs". Besides that, if the mediation with the harsh reality of our social structures does not want to be transformed in connivance or even complicity with them, the ethical flag of the primacy of the other has to be raised at any

instance. The phagocytising reality that does not stop subsuming the subject under the over-ordained fixed set of concepts can be only resisted by appealing to the other as the unconceivable, the incomprehensible: a constant monition against a system casting on the subject its norms, rules, divisions, identities.

Acting within these structures in the attempt to find mediation with this reality requires a radical ethical subversion of categories, lest this mediation becomes just another act of reproduction of the current system. That human beings are intrinsically worthy of their lives, that it is our task to preserve their dignity and made it flourish; but also and foremost that the other (the underprivileged, the marginalised, the periphery – no matter whether that of the city or that of the world) comes before myself – even before my understanding of them – and that it is my duty to help them: these are the postulates whose systematic structure can be turned into a laic and even materialistic ethics. To repeat after Benjamin, these are the secret moves of the "little hunchback who was an expert chess player" – of theology – that can make the "puppet in Turkish attire" – materialism – win the game (see Benjamin 2007, 253). The primacy of the other and the indelible dignity of man – these two theological principles – could be the *Parousia* of the current times. The saviour is no longer a supernatural entity that comes from above, it is rather man himself, but nonetheless moved by these two ethical postulates, exceeding history as its ultimate ideal and still acting eminently within history. Lifting the flag of human dignity within the social and political environment leads to the construction of *solidarity* (Bloch 1986, chap. 22), informed by equality and the end of oppression. This is how eschatology as a function is performed as mediation with the real, as commitment to actual needs – and it is perhaps from here that the search for the *sufficient condition* of an answer to the impelling political demands could start; from here it is perhaps possible to re-think political subjectivity. The mobilisation of this ethical imaginary of solidarity shows the power of the eschatological element. The extra-historical messianic element – the primacy of the other and the absolute dignity of man – albeit exceeding the *continuum* of time, since it is referred to the fulfilment of time, still acts and operates within the stream of history, ethically and politically re-orienting its course.

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This ethical imaginary, which shows the ultimate political goal can be subsumed under what Bloch calls the "warm stream" of Marxism and its mediation with the historical process, is what distinguishes Blochian messianic temporality from that of Agamben. The proper meaning of

this mediation has to be looked for inside the Blochian distinction between, and interconnection of, the *warm stream* and the *cold stream* in Marxism, so described in his *magnum opus*:

> The conditional analysis of the whole historical-situational stretch emerges both as an unmasking of ideologies and as a disenchantment of the metaphysical illusions; precisely this belongs to the most useful *cold stream* of Marxism. [...] To the *warm stream* of Marxism, however, belong liberating intention and materialistically humane, humanely materialistic real tendency, towards whose goal all these disenchantments are undertaken. (Bloch 1996b, 1:209)

These two streams are deeply interdependent, the one being the *way* to follow, the other the *goal* to achieve. Their point of connection is that in which the eschatological function operates. It is thanks to the *warm stream* that the goal of human solidarity can be conceived as *telos* (one of a non-fixed teleology) that exerts its power in continually modifying and re-defining the course of history.

To sum up, it is the task of the *warm stream* of Marxism to individuate an accessible image of the ultimate goal, rather than abdicating to any political end, lest it could lead to an identitarian conception of politics unable to escape the seizure of the biopolitical machine. This image has nonetheless to be indeterminate, its *telos* has to be still *in fieri*, not pre-defined or given in advance; solidarity and emancipation are by definition achievable via an imposed process. This not-yet defined, not-yet fulfilled *eschaton* is the lynchpin of mediation, since it bridges the gap between the extra-historical and the intra-historical dimensions. And this operation takes place in the very moment when history itself is forged, in the now of the decision. As in Agamben, messianic time is the present, but for Bloch the present is the time of mediation, not of subtraction. With his words: "The moment [*Augenblick*] – which for everyone else constitutes a conceptual embarrassment – is raised here to the time of decision, in the perspective of a Totality" (Bloch 1985, 600). It is worth stressing that the *Augenblick* here is not an isolated instant, a flickering flash in the darkness of time, but rather the re-activation of a process, an extra thrust towards the pre-figured but always provisional aim – the "Totality" of justice and equality. This is messianic time: the time of decision, a mediation that takes place in the here and now, but clung to the perspective of totality, i.e. with the picture of the ultimate goal as a leading-image, with the new *Parousia* of solidarity. The exceedance of history which acts within history itself.

Conclusion

Within the horizon of the current crisis of political subjectivity, the hard task of reinvigorating and rebuilding a Marxist subjectivity, while in the meantime rejecting the paradigms of the twentieth century – party, class, state – is often assigned to messianic or, more widely, to political theology (Vatter 2017). Still, it is not clear what the extent and the limitations of such an approach are. It could be true that today the political left is struggling to find an organisation and a structure fit for itself, but perhaps the gesture of subtraction of political subjectivity can be stopped short of becoming total itself. In so far as the commitment to the underprivileged, the marginalised and the oppressed is still present at the core of the left, by addressing their need, the messianic as the powerful spirit of the *warm stream* can help to tear the veil of necessity and provide them with the hope for a possible transformation. And in this relationship, turning our attention to those whom history has forgotten, it is perhaps possible to win back the populist party consensus now almost entirely monopolised by the far-right. The *cold stream*, on the other hand, calls for a re-thinking of macroeconomics, debunking its myths and understanding the soft powers, showing the limits and the paradoxes of the current economic-political systems. Any kind of organisation needs achievable goals – no matter how provisional – to provide feasibility for any project of an alternative socio-political structure. The way to the solution of the problem of subjectivity for the left passes through this care for the least and this attention to the actual economic situation. Bloch's future-oriented utopia and his call for engagement may be its milestones.

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Autor: Federico Filauri
Tytuł: Tajemnica Powrotu: Agamben i Bloch o Paruzji św. Pawła i czasie mesjańskim
Abstrakt: W ciągu ostatnich dwóch dziesięcioleci nowe, radykalne odczytania listów św. Pawła pozwoliły licznym myślicielom zawrzeć w ich filozofii politycznej mesjanistyczny element. W odczytaniach tych mesjanistyczne odrzucenie świata i jego praw jest rozumiane poprzez zawieszający akt „subtrakcji" – ruch wycofania, którego przekład na polityczną praktykę zbyt często jednak okazywał się nieskuteczny.

Po przeanalizowaniu Agambenowskiej interpretacji subtrakcji przez pryzmat „nieoperacyjności", artykuł koncentruje się na pojęciu *Paruzji* jako elementu kluczowego dla zrozumienia jego antyutopijnego ujęcia mesjańskiego czasu. W przeciwieństwie do odczytania Agambena, Blochowska intepretacja Pawłowej *Paruzji* przedstawia wydarzenie mesjańskie jako wewnątrzhistoryczne, ale równocześnie otwarte wobec celów ostatecznych (metahistorycznych). Jak przekonuję, mesjańskie wezwanie Blocha przyjmuje formę zapośredniczenia, skorygowania subtrakcji tak, by umożliwiała większe zaangażowanie polityczne. W zakończeniu tekstu sugeruję, że konkretne zastosowania tego zapośredniczenia pełnią swą funkcję emancypacyjną tylko o tyle, o ile przyjmują charakter praktycznej etyki, w której uwaga skierowana jest na nieuprzywilejowanych i marginalizowanych.
Słowa kluczowe: czas mesjański, paruzja, subtrakcja, Bloch, Agamben

FELIPE CATALANI

Anticipation as Critique: Objective Phantasy from Ernst Bloch to Günther Anders

This paper aims to interpret the role of "objective phantasy" in the utopian tradition of critical theory, with an emphasis on Bloch, but also the evolution of its usage with authors such as Marcuse and Adorno. The main function of phantasy taken into consideration is its capacity to go beyond present facts (what is made possible by an anti-positivist concept of truth in critical theory) and to *anticipate*. This anticipatory element of phantasy is dependent, as we try to demonstrate, on a reflection of *affects around expectation*. Ultimately, we oppose two models of anticipatory imagination (while showing their inner relation): a utopian one (primarily conceptualized by Bloch) and its counterpoint, catastrophist anticipation, which assumes its most radical form in Günther Anders' reflections on the atomic age, and whose actuality and urgency we seek to emphasize.

Keywords: Objective Phantasy, Anticipation, Ernst Bloch, Günther Anders

> ... and there seek the true, the real, where
> the merely factual disappears.
> Bloch, Spirit of Utopia

Truth as anticipation

The utopian spirit presupposes a distance towards immediate reality because it desires something that does not exist. Certain authors in the tradition of so-called critical theory have sought to work with a concept of truth and an idea of knowledge that would correspond to the exigence of being *against existing reality*. Such an impulse had something in common with the aesthetic avantgarde, close to expressionism. Hartmut Scheible wrote that the birth of critical theory could be interpreted in light of the *spirit* of expressionism and that Ernst Bloch's *Geist der Utopie* could be called "Philosophy of Expressionism" (Scheible 2012). As Gottfried Benn used to say, "reality is a capitalist concept".[1] Against reality, Bloch stated that a "realism without peace with the existent [*Realistik ohne Frieden mit der Vorhandenheit*]" (Bloch 1985b, 621) was necessary. Against the bad facticity of the present, affirmed and legitimized by positivism (understood in a broader sense), was the political desire to go beyond the force of facts in a way that was not separate from knowledge. In this context, the *imagination* gains epistemological (and political) dignity, because it reaches beyond the "bad present" (*schlechte Gegenwart*) and has an anticipating character which gives a "temporal core" (*Zeitkern*) to the knowing process, as defended by Adorno.

Before we return to the critical function of imagination (or *phantasy*), it is important to note that in the dialectical tradition (into which Bloch and the critical theory are inserted), there is already an emphatic concept of *truth* that is critically related to the "bad present" of facts and also has an anticipating element. As all concepts in Bloch's philosophy are so strictly intertwined, and encircle the problem of utopia, it should come as no surprise that his concept of truth also has a utopian dimension. But what does it mean? Michael Löwy tells us about a conversation he had with Bloch in the 1970s, in which this relation appears:

> Among his remarks during our conversation, there is one that struck me and that summarizes the persistent fidelity of an entire life to the idea of utopia:

1 Quoted from Carlos Eduardo Jordão Machado, it affirms that: "Reality meant liberalism, Darwinism, war, historical humiliation, injustice and power, dissolution of nature and history. 'Reality' was, for Benn, a 'demoniacal' concept, it was the reality of scientifical rationalization" (Jordão Machado 2016, 15).

> "The world as it exists *is not true*. There is a second truth concept which is not positivist, which is not founded on the ascertainment of facticity […]; but which is charged with value, as for example in the concept "a true friend", […] where there is a relation to the moral sphere. And if that doesn't correspond to the facts – and for us, Marxists, facts are only reified moments of a process, and nothing else – in this case, *so much worse for the facts*, would say the old Hegel." (Löwy 2009, 11)

That Bloch finishes his thought with a quote from Hegel on the utopian character of truth according to which the world is *false*, is no coincidence. The Hegelian concept of truth played a decisive role in dialectical theory as a critical concept that could point out the *falsity* (and not only the injustice) of existing reality (going beyond the definition of propositional truth, which is, for Hegel, mere "correctness" [*Richtigkeit*]).[2] It is no wonder that the interpretation of this concept is emphasized in *Reason and Revolution*, Marcuse's study on Hegel, as well as in Adorno's *Three studies on Hegel*.[3] But what then is Hegel's concept of truth? If it's possible to explain it briefly, it is *not* the traditional conception of truth as the accordance of a judgment to an actual state of things, as it is in the tradition of truth as *adaequatio intellectus et rei*. Truth for Hegel is not the correctness of knowledge (*Richtigkeit des Wissens*), because truth is "not an attribute of thought, but of reality in process" (Marcuse 1941, 25). Also, Bloch (1963), in his *Tübinger Einleitung*, differentiates correctness as mere formal truth and a truth of content. This distinction is quite clear in Hegel's *Encyclopedia*:

> By truth, one understands at first that I *know* how something is. Yet this is truth only in relation to consciousness or the formal truth, mere correctness. In contrast to this, truth in the deeper sense consists in this, that objectivity is identical with the concept. It is truth in this deeper sense that is at stake if, for example, one is speaking of a *true* state or of a *true* work of art. These objects [*Gegenstände*] are true if they are what they *should* be, that is to say, if their reality corresponds to their concept. (Hegel 2010a, 284)

2 However, the Habermasian and post-Habermasian tradition of critical theory abandoned this concept. As Habermas says, one of the "three errors" of the old critical theorists was that their Hegelian concept of truth was "incompatible with scientific work" (Habermas 2015, 247-8). The other two were their "disdain towards bourgeois democracy" and a problem in its "normative basis" (Habermas 1985, 171-172).

3 Adorno also approaches Hegel's concept of truth in the sense that we are discussing here in his lectures *Einführung in die Dialektik*.

As Bloch says, truth must be an "intervening picture of the tendencies-latencies" [...] (Bloch 1985a, 250).

Yet, such an accordance of an object with its own concept is actualized only in the becoming, as a result of a process: truth is not the "notion" (*Begriff*) in contrast to the falsehood of the object, but truth emerges in its processual contradiction and is not, therefore, *static* (it is different from Kant's *idea*, which has a regulative function). This is the sense behind what Adorno said about the "temporal core of truth". Under this aspect, Hegel's concept of truth already contains something anticipatory, as it necessarily pushes beyond the pure present in its processual character. Truth does not have a character of timelessness and eternity. Instead, it carries in itself the historical process and, as such, is neither apart from the future nor the past, as for Hegel, truth is the *result*. As Bloch says, truth must be an "intervening picture of the tendencies-latencies" [*eingreifende Abbildung der Tendenzen - Latenzen*] (Bloch 1985a, 250). It is then *eingreifend*, it intervenes, so it is not contemplative but has a performative force: it stresses what is present as tendencies, what is *not yet* actualized. To avoid confusion, it is important to say that Hegel's concept of truth is *not* a positive anticipation of future phenomena, but it *pushes* towards the future as it is anchored in contradiction and becoming (*Werden*). The truth of something, as this *propelling beyond itself*, is derived from the thing's own negativity. This becomes clear when Hegel explains what finitude is in his *Science of Logic*: "Finite things are, but in their reference to themselves they refer to themselves negatively – in this very self-reference they propel themselves beyond themselves, beyond their being. They are, but the truth of this being is [...] their end" (Hegel 2010b, 101). The "not being in peace with the existent," to which Bloch referred to, is not something merely subjective, but we could say that in the dialectical comprehension of the world, *the existent is not at peace with itself*. Its own immanent negativity produces the processuality of truth. As Hegel writes in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, "the truth is the bacchanalian revel where not a member is sober [...]" (Hegel 2018, 29).

Imagination and expectating affects

The idea of a "realism without peace with the existent" could be the synthesis of the idea of critical theory that should be "realistic" and *against* reality; that is, critical theory should refer objectively to reality, but without *accepting* this reality. As affirmed before, this *pointing out beyond existing reality* cannot be solely subjective, but strives to be objectively grounded (although we could also say that the subjective desire

for transformation already contains the objective moment, "for suffering is objectivity that weighs upon the subject; its most subjective experience [...] is objectively conveyed" [Adorno 2007, 18]). In the dialectical tradition, especially stressed by Bloch, there is a relation between anticipation and immanent critique, so that in opposition to an "abstract" character of an anticipating image, Bloch aims at a *concrete* anticipation. As Rehmann explains it: "In Bloch, especially in *The Principle of Hope*, anticipation assumes the position of a basic anthropological concept. As a subjective correlate of a "not-yet-become" [*Noch-Nicht-Gewordenen*] in the social reality, it designates the general human capacity to anticipate [*vorwegnehmen*] something of the future, to "intend" [*"vor"-zu-haben*] for it" (Rehmann 2012, 3).

The main point is to show how the subjective anticipatory desire and the objective tendency of the world can be associated. While in Hegel this element of anticipation can be accessed solely through rational knowledge, in Bloch (and in the utopian tradition of critical theory) this relation between the "not yet being" and the bad present occurs in a specific faculty that can anticipate: phantasy (or imagination, which often appears as a synonym). As is known, this was also one of Bloch's main concepts in his philosophy of concrete utopia. However, that phantasy had to be, as he says, an "objective", or "exact phantasy" (as also employed by Benjamin and Adorno): adjectives that seem to create a paradox between the arbitrariness of subjective desire and the demand for exactitude or objectivity. The non-utopian version of it is employed in an example by Habermas when he states that "institutional phantasy" (Habermas 1995, 80) is needed to create solutions for the institutionalization of the media (Honneth also used this term in a radio interview to refer to the management of the refugee problem). In this case, going beyond existing reality is already out of question (and we could ask whether in the "institutional phantasy" we can still find a drop of imagination that is not the pure reproduction of existing reality...).

How can phantasy then satisfy this demand for critical knowledge, as something that connects presence and absence, present and future, *Sein* and *Sollen*? As Marcuse puts it, closer to the realm of desire, phantasy "remains free from the rule of the reality principle" and "stays committed to the pleasure principle" (Marcuse 1974, 14). As such, in the same way that "Marxism rescued the rational core of utopia" (Bloch 1996, 141), there is a truth moment in phantasy that expresses the rational aspect of the irrational, a promise contained in the suffering of unfulfilled desires (as Adorno said in his *Negative Dialectics*, "to lend a voice to suffering is a condition of all truth" [Adorno 2007, 17-18]):

> *Phantasy is cognitive in so far as it preserves the truth of the Great Refusal*, or, positively, in so far as it protects, against all reason, the aspiration for the integral fulfillment of man and nature which are repressed by reason. In the realm of phantasy, the unreasonable images of freedom become rational, and the 'lower depth' of instinctual gratification assumes a new dignity. (Marcuse 1974, 160, emphasis added)

Bloch's *Principle of Hope* could be read, generally speaking, as a theory of expectating affects, in which the anticipatory[4] element is present. Hope is doubtlessly central, but in Bloch's "system" (despite the fragmentary character of his writings, his philosophy *does* have a systematic dimension) the capacity to hope is dependent on the imagination. But the materialist moment of this theory (if we understand materialism in a broader than usual sense)[5] is that these expectating affects are all intertwined with the instinctual dimension (often related to Freud's theory of drives), as can be noted in Marcuse's and Adorno's approaches. In the case of Bloch, the anticipation is intertwined with a theory of *hunger*. In an interesting (but maybe questionable) way, he tries to substitute Freud's concept of the *libido* for one of hunger, which he considers to be a "lower" drive related to the instinct of self-preservation. "Hunger, the main drive, must be worked out here, and the way it proceeds to the rejection of deprivation, that is, to the most important expectant emotion: hope" (Bloch 1996, 11). This pointing beyond the present is something objectively anchored in concrete individuals: "The stomach is the first lamp into which oil must be poured. Its longing is precise, its drive is so unavoidable that it cannot even be repressed for long" (Bloch 1996, 65). The drives push the phantasy towards the future (as a negation of the bad present) and are transformed in "*revolutionary interest*":

> Hunger cannot help continually renewing itself. But if it increases uninterrupted, satisfied by no certain bread, then it suddenly changes. The body-ego then becomes rebellious, does not go out in search of food merely within the old framework. It seeks to change the situation which has caused its empty stomach, its hanging head. The No to the bad situation which exists, the Yes to the better

4 Here I should make a linguistic note: in English, anticipation may eventually be used as a synonym for expectation, which is not exactly the case for German and other Latin languages. Surely there is a narrow connection, but here I use the word "anticipation" (and the adjective "anticipatory") in the sense of *vorwegnehmen*, while "expectation" is rather closer to *Erwartung and Hoffnung*.

5 That is, not as orthodox Marxism of the *Diamat* understands it.

> life that hovers ahead, is incorporated by the deprived into *revolutionary interest*. (Bloch 1996, 75)

It is not fortuitous that one of Marcuse's main concerns in his reflections on late industrial society and the developments of the post-war *Welfare State* was the repressive satisfaction of needs, which squelched the subjective desire for transformation and produced, to say it briefly, conformism.[6] Likewise, Günther Anders speaks of a "lack of lack [*Mangel an Mangel*]" of a society in which "*everything is present*" (Anders 2003, 119). It is important to note that in opposition to Marcuse's and Anders' pessimistic views on the historical changes that restrain the possibilities of social transformation, for Bloch, the disappearance of the "lack" and of the utopian desire is not thematized, as utopian hope acquires in his work an anthropological ground (in the sense of Adorno's critique that hope could not be a *principle*).[7] These historical transformations were also pointed out in the *Dialectics of Enlightenment* in which the atrophy of phantasy[8] was analyzed as a form of social domination and as a regression of intelligence. In this sense, *stupidity* (which according to Adorno and Horkheimer, carries the wounds of domination and violence)[9] was seen as the inability to go beyond the immediate facticity, to *anticipate*, to imagine the *not yet*. At the same time, it was also against the "clever people" that thought using the most rational arguments that "fascism was impossible in the West" (and were unable to *imagine and anticipate* the worst), that Adorno and Horkheimer wrote that "one of the lessons of the Hitler period is the stupidity of cleverness" (Adorno and Horkheimer 2002, 173). Already in the preface of the book, they affirm that

6 As Hans Jürgen Krahl synthesizes: "At the center of Marcuse's theory of revolution is the question: how can the necessity for emancipation be developed under the conditions of a repressive satisfaction of the elementary material necessities? How can the necessities for a kingdom of freedom, peace and happiness enter the consciousness of the masses and push forwards to a political phenomenon, if they are not anchored anymore in the material vital necessities for the abolition of hunger, material misery and physical suffering?" (Krahl 1971, 304).

7 However, although Marcuse had a radical pessimistic interpretaton of the transformations of contemporary capitalism, he was still much closer than Anders and Adorno to Bloch's conception of the instinctual irreducibility of the utopian desire.

8 "Fantasy withers" (Adorno and Horkheimer 2002, 28).

9 "Stupidity is a scar. It can relate to one faculty among many or to them all, practical and mental. Every partial stupidity in a human being marks a spot where the awakening play of muscles has been inhibited instead of fostered" (Adorno and Horkheimer 2002, 214).

"the blocking of theoretical imagination has paved the way for political delusion" (Adorno and Horkheimer 2002, xvi).

In Adorno's understanding of the new functioning of ideology, the deceit was not a false appearance that would "cover" true reality: rather, the *facts* in themselves and their crude reduplication in conscience were ideological (so that, as he analyzes in his *Minima Moralia*, *cynicism* becomes structural). Furthermore, in an early essay by Marcuse entitled "Philosophy and critical theory", the concept of phantasy (or imagination) emerges as a crucial element for grasping the temporal quality of reality, that is, for grasping that which is not only *present*, in the same sense of Bloch's anticipatory conscience provided by objective phantasy. In this sense, phantasy is directly related to the cognition of the possibility of the future and occupies a central place at the beginnings of critical theory:

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> In order to retain what is not yet present as a goal in the present, phantasy is required. The essential connection of phantasy with philosophy is evident from the function attributed to it by philosophers, especially Aristotle and Kant, under the title of 'imagination'. Owing to its unique capacity to 'intuit' an object though the latter be not present and to create something new out of given material of cognition, imagination denotes a considerable degree of independence from the given, of freedom amid a world of unfreedom. In surpassing what is present, it can anticipate the future. […] Without phantasy, all philosophical knowledge remains in the grip of the present or the past and severed from the future, which is the only link between philosophy and the real history of mankind. (Marcuse 2009, 114)

Phantasy then gives cognitive character to the wish for something better, for something not yet existent: the *future* receives truth character.[10] This could be highlighted as one of the main characteristics of critical theory, inasmuch as (in the words of Horkheimer) "truth depends on our will, on action. Willing, knowing, and acting are not bricks that can be piled up arbitrarily, but they depend upon each other" (Horkheimer 1988, 209). Such an intimate relation between imagination and desire, very clear in Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization*, appears in a quite similar manner in Bloch's *The Principle of Hope*:

> [...] wishing arises, if not actually out of imagined ideas, then only together with them. At the same time it is further stimulated by them to the same degree that

10 "The truth value of imagination relates not only to the past but also to the future: the forms of freedom and happiness which it invokes claim to deliver the historical *reality*" (Marcuse 1974, 148-9).

> what is pictured, pictured ahead, promises fulfilment. Thus where there is the imagined idea of something better, ultimately perhaps perfect, wishing takes place, possibly impatient, demanding wishing. The mere imagined idea thus becomes a wishful image, stamped with the cachet: this is how *it should be*. (Bloch, 1996, p. 46)

This "how it should be" of wishing that arises with imagination is in tension with reality, but it cannot be completely detached from it – as per the Hegelian motto, "no *Sollen* without *Sein*". In this case, phantasy operates as a kind of immanent critique, and not a transcendent, abstract, purely moralistic critique. Phantasy for Bloch is not the pejorative *Phantasterei*, in the sense of what is criticized as an abstract utopia of a strictly subjective act of thought that is completely apart from existing reality, as a freestanding criteria used to judge the world, but is something at the same time *grounded in reality*: that's why for Bloch it is not only necessary as an anti-positivistic concept of truth, but also as "a new concept of reality":

> the concrete imagination and the imagery of its mediated anticipations are fermenting in the process of the real itself and are depicted in the concrete forward dream; anticipating elements are a component of reality itself. Thus the will towards utopia is entirely compatible with object-based tendency, in fact is confirmed and at home within it. (Bloch 1996, 197)

Utopian and catastrophist anticipation

In many aspects, we can bring together Bloch's considerations on phantasy (as exposited above) and those brought about by authors of the Frankfurt school such as Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse. But Bloch's certainty that there is an objective correlate to the concrete imagination "fermenting in the process of the real" can no longer be affirmed by those authors. Their "pessimism" is anchored in a diagnosis of time that is attentive to the historical transformations of the 20th century, while in Bloch it may be possible to say that there is nothing like a "diagnosis of time", but rather an ontology, or a philosophical anthropology of hope, which risks becoming indifferent to historical change. This "object--based tendency" towards utopia is somehow also the quintessence of an optimistic philosophy of history present in Hegel and in the young Marx, where the realization of freedom appears as the truth of history, something to which the historical process, moved by its internal contradictions, will conduct humanity. "The world-process itself is a utopian

function, with the matter of the objectively Possible as its substance" (Bloch 1996, 177). The faith in the "world-process" is exactly what cannot be defended anymore, as it risks becoming a sign of historical blindness. The age of catastrophic events that achieved its highest point with the Nazi apocalypse and the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (which are not to be read as *accidents* of the historical process) inaugurated a new era and inverted this historical necessity as "a new world time" of diminishing expectations, as per Paulo Arantes.[11] Carl Schmitt said that Hegel died in 1933[12]. In a way, the Frankfurtian intellectual experience could be said to be a reflection of this statement. (Heidegger, on the contrary, in a much more radically apologetic manner, responded to Schmitt by stating that Hegel did not die on the 30th january 1933 – on that date he would have "just started to live")[13]. Adorno, in one of his aphorisms in *Minima Moralia*, conceived fascism not as a contingent event in world history, but as something that reveals its inner sense:

> Had Hegel's philosophy of history embraced this age, Hitler's robot-bombs would have found their place beside the early death of Alexander and similar images, as one of the selected empirical facts by which the state of the world--spirit manifests itself directly in symbols. Like Fascism itself, the robots career without a subject. Like it they combine utmost technical perfection with total blindness. And like it they arouse mortal terror and are wholly futile. 'I have seen the world spirit', not on horseback, but on wings and without a head, and that refutes, at the same stroke, Hegel's philosophy of history. (Adorno 2005, 55)

The world-process reveals itself rather as a *dystopian* function: that is why the sense of the Revolution for Walter Benjamin (and I would say also for Adorno) is no longer the same as for Marx, as something that is brought about by the objective conditions of the historical process as historical destiny, but is rather something that must go *against* the world-process; it is an "emergency brake" that must stop the historical

11 For a diagnosis of a change in the historical experience and its temporal structure (based in Koselleck's categories), see Arantes' *O novo tempo do mundo* (Arantes 2014).

12 This anecdote is explained by Jean-François Kervégan (2011) in his study on Carl Schmitt.

13 These notes are from a seminar on Hegel's concept of state that Heidegger gave in the winter semester of 1934/35. I reproduce them here in the original so the reader can judge it by himself: "Am 30. 1. 33 ist 'Hegel gestorben' – nein! Er hat noch gar nicht 'gelebt'! – da ist er erst *lebendig* geworden [...]." (Heidegger 2011, 85)

tendencies that are pushing humanity towards the abyss. *Progress* is not something to be affirmed, but to be stopped. In his fragment "Fire Alarm" from *One-way Street*, Benjamin writes: "Before the spark reaches the dynamite, the lighted fuse must be cut" (Benjamin 1972, 122). This is radical anticipation and future-oriented thought, but also an inversion of Bloch: what is anticipated is not the *summum bonum*, but the catastrophe, and what is anticipated is not to be realized, but to be negated. The enunciation of the future in this anticipatory thought (as in the tradition of the "prophetic intellectuals") has a performative character, here both in the utopian and in the catastrophic sense. The utopian anticipation desires to force reality towards the future: the future must become present. But the catastrophic anticipation, the other side of eschatological thought, announces the future in order to *avoid it* (this is what Günther Anders called "prophylactic catastrophism" [Anders 2009, 179]). This negative relation towards the future can become blackmail in a situation in which we cannot exit the bad present. This is certainly a form of living the *urgency*, but catastrophic anticipation in Benjamin (and in Anders) should be understood as the need for urgent transformation of the present, and not the maintenance of the situation in which we are stuck as a perpetual avoidance of the future. But it is relevant to note that in both forms of relation to the future (utopianism and catastrophism), the anticipation occurs as an *exaggeration* of present tendencies. The main point is not the correctness of a "prediction" of future events, but rather to point out how the future is lived in the present,[14] that is, how the present carries anticipating moments: objectively and subjectively.

The main point is not the correctness of a "prediction" of future events, but rather to point out how the future is lived in the present , that is, how the present carries anticipating moments: objectively and subjectively.

A clearer counterpoint to Bloch than Benjamin is Günther Anders, who was not exactly in the Frankfurter circle and who was known to be the "alarmist" philosopher of the nuclear apocalypse. He radically inverts Bloch's categories, and although he criticizes Blochian hope sharply and directly, does not simply abandon Bloch, but actualizes his philosophy through its inversion, in what we could call a *sublation* of hope. Already the title of his book on the atomic age (*Endzeit und Zeitenende*, Time of End and End of Times) ironically (or tragically?) inverts Bloch's con-

14 In the phenomenological tradition, an analysis of future as "lived time" independent of a *knowledge* of the future, but in the everyday experience of trying to foresee it, was done by Eugene Minkowski (1970), that cannot be adequately approached in this text. But he distinguishes a positive and projective relation to future as *activity*, and a negative (and passive one), defined as "expectation", in which "we live time in an inverse sense; we see the future come toward us and wait for that (expected) future to become present" (Minkowski 1970, 88).

cepts of *Wendezeit* and *Zeitenwende* (time of changes and change of times). The technical development that led to the real possibility of humanity's annihilation (that concurrently signifies for Anders, the "annihilation of our possibilities") changed the anthropological foundations of utopia as analyzed by Bloch.[15] This ambiguous relation of Anders to Bloch as it appears in his writings ranges from love and admiration – he dedicated one of his books to him – to indignation, accusing Bloch of historical blindness and of being a "*professionelle Hoffer* […], who would not let himself be frightened or disappointed by Auschwitz or Hiroshima" (Anders 2013, 452). Anders' critique of Bloch was based on a diagnosis of time that gained a certain metaphysical character. There is a radical difference between the world before and after 1945: the "atomic age" is not an age that will be surpassed, but is the *last age*. In this sense, this age is a *reprieve* (*Frist*):

> *The epoch of changing epochs no longer exists after 1945*. Now we live in an era that is no longer one epoch that precedes others, but rather a reprieve, during which our existence is endlessly nothing but a "barely-still-existing". The obsolescence of Ernst Bloch, who resisted even taking the event of Hiroshima into consideration, consisted in his faith — which almost amounted to indolence — in the idea that we are still living in a "not yet", that is, in a "pre-history", one that precedes the authentic one. He could not, even for one minute, be motivated to lose hope (Anders 2013, 20).

Later on, he would even state: "Hope is just another word for cowardliness" (Anders 1987). Anders writes this in a context in which he pleas for political violence and civil disobedience in a state of things where there is nothing to hope for, where hope means nothing but pure inertia. If Bloch saw hope as a form of "*militanter Optimismus*", Anders sees it as expression of conformism, as the incapacity to despair, as gutlessness. As a response to Anders' provocative political despair, two young men wrote:

> Do not take away our Bloch, Günther Anders! Our belletristic embellished hope. […] Bloch cannot be saved anymore; we know. And yet we need him as a life spirit and '*Atemgeber*', because we still have – hopefully – a life ahead of us, we are only 35 years old, and not already 85. (Anders 1987, 52)

15 This anthropological transformation of the technological era, that could be resumed in the idea of the gap (*Gefälle*) between that what we can imagine and that what we can produce, is the object of his *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen*.

But, like for Bloch, phantasy has a crucial cognitive (and political) dimension for Anders as well. "The decisive moral task today", writes Anders, is the "expansion of the moral phantasy" (*Ausdehnung moralischer Phantasie*) (Anders 2010, 273). Although, if for Bloch phantasy has a utopian function in the sense of an anthropological constant, in Anders' anthropology of the atomic age we have become "*inverted utopians*", in a sense that reality went beyond our capacity of imagination:

> So this is the basic dilemma of our age: *we are smaller than ourselves*, that is, we are unable to make an image of that which we have made. In this sense we are *inverted utopians*: while utopians are those who can't produce what they imagine, we cannot imagine that what we produce. (Anders 2003, 96)

This is the reason for Anders' affirmation that "phantasy is realistic": anticipation and objective phantasy are a form of exaggeration, an *Übertreiben* of reality's own tendencies (and, as Adorno says, exaggeration, the loss of measure, is essential to dialectics)[16]. But, for Anders, reality itself is exaggerated: the atomic bomb, the murder of millions, the technical possibility of exterminating humanity is an objective exaggeration: "The phantastic and the real are mixed up" (Anders 2013, 331). In this sense, we need phantasy and anticipatory thought to understand not the future, but the *present*, because reality has anticipated itself and went beyond us. We have become unable, with our lack of phantasy, to cognitively understand present reality and to react morally to it. The exaggerated language of the apocalyptic prophet is an attempt to make an adequate image of present reality, or the exaggeration is the evidence that the idea of an "adequate image" has grown old (and that truth is necessarily *emphatic truth*, as exposed at the beginning of this text). The bomb, as a simple object that doesn't show off its own potentiality and that becomes "understated" (*untertrieben*), is an object that cannot be simply *described* – its image is already a minimization. In this regard, Anders claims that "trivialized objects require exaggerating [*übertreibende*] formulations" (Anders 2010, 235). But with his anticipating exaggeration, Anders again inverts Bloch, for whom "the exaggeration and fantasizing represent a significant pre-appearance, circulating in turbulent existence itself, of what is real" (Bloch 1996, 214-215). In relation to aesthetics, Bloch also defends that "in great art, exaggeration and fantasizing are most visibly applied to tendential consistency and concrete

16 See Adorno's aphorism "How sickly seem all growing things" in his *Minima Moralia* (Adorno 2005, 71).

utopia" (Bloch 1996, 216). The utopian exaggeration in art expresses for Bloch a tendency in existing reality.

If for Bloch one needs to "learn to wait" (Bloch 1996, 21), for Anders *patience* cannot be considered to be a virtue anymore, as in a similar way to Benjamin, he thinks in terms of *emergency*. Without any positive image of the future, we become "prisoners of the present" (Anders 2003, 120). Having in mind Bloch's philosophy of hope, we should remember that for Spinoza, there is a complementarity between hope and *fear* (Spinoza, 1996). That is, to hope that something good will happen also means that this good might not come, and to fear that something bad will happen is to concurrently hope that this bad might not occur. In both cases, the relation with temporality is that of *expectation* (and *images*, which are also at the heart of Spinoza's argumentation). Against these expectating affects, Spinoza would plea for freedom in *securitas*. Lacan once said that "a life without hope is a life without fear" (Safatle 2016, 137). That is, from a Lacanian standpoint (based on Spinoza's considerations), there is a pathological element in anticipation (in hope and fear), which is lived necessarily as an anxiety that blocks the experience of the present. In this regard, the loss of hope is seen as a gain (in a similar way as in Anders). But one should not be unjust to Bloch and play against him this critique of hope as a passive position of the subject, in which living the future (anticipating) means a blockage of the experience of the present. On the contrary: the instant (*Augenblick*) is at the core of Bloch's reflections in *The Principle of Hope*, where he writes, for example, that "extraordinary men of action seem to offer genuine *Carpe diem*, as decision at the required moment, as power not to miss its opportunity" (Bloch 1996, 294).

But even if we acknowledge this complementarity of hope and fear, as demonstrated by Spinoza, it is pertinent to note that Anders does not simply plea for a life without anxiety/fear (*Angst*) in his critique of hope. We can say that he maintains a fidelity to Blochian hope and utopian anticipation, but through its inversion in *Angst*:

> Nothing is more wrong than the popular saying of the half-educated, that we already live in the "age of fear [*Zeitalter der Angst*]". This is spoken into us by the journalistic Fellow-Travellers of those who fear that we muster up the true fear, the fear that is adequate to the danger. Rather, we live in the *Age of Trivialization and of Incapacity to Fear*. The commandment [*Gebot*] to expand our imagination means specifically: we have to expand our fear. Postulate: *Do not be afraid of fear, have courage to fear. And also the courage to scare* [*Angst zu machen*]. *Scare your neighbors as yourself* [*Ängstige deinen Nachbarn wie dich*

> *selbst*]. – Certainly, this our fear must be of a very special kind. 1. A fearless fear [*furchtlose Angst*], since it excludes all fear of those who could mock of us as fraidy-cats. 2. An invigorating fear [*belebende Angst*], because it must throw us into the streets instead of under our beds. 3. A loving fear [*liebende Angst*], that should fear *for* the world, and not just fear that what might happen to us. (Anders 2003, 98)

Fear is not only identical to hope (as its negative). Anders elaborates a dialectics of fear and *courage*, so that we can affirm that *without fear there is no courage*. Marx was aware of this dialectic when he wrote in the introduction to the *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* that "the nation must be taught to be *terrified* of itself, in order to give it *courage*" (Marx 1987, 56). Hopelessness as fear does not mean resignation in the present and, as the dialectical contrary of hope, is opposed to apathy, which means nothing other than a lack of imagination.

Hopelessness as fear doesn't mean resignation in the present and, as the dialectical contrary of hope, is opposed to apathy, which means nothing other than a lack of imagination.

Conclusion

The practical force of theory is essential to the idea of critical theory, and as we tried to demonstrate, Bloch (and other authors in the tradition of the Frankfurt school) provided this force with a concept of truth that pushes thought beyond the present facts, a force taken from the negativity of the false. This pulsation of the negative in the present points to the future and acquires an anticipatory dimension. This pushing forward is, for Bloch (and also for Marcuse and Adorno), often tied to the drives (to *hunger*, as developed in *The Principle of Hope*) and to the realm of desire. What gives cognitive character for the desire for the better, projected in future, is *phantasy*, which appears as the specific faculty that can *anticipate*. In addition, the intertwining of the theoretical and the practical moments is at the core of the idea of critical theory, the "objective phantasy" is a privileged form of a "realism that is not in peace with reality", putting cognition and desire together. Phantasy *exaggerates precisely* what is present as tendency, so that the *future* gains relevance in theory and in political practice.

The actuality of anticipatory thought may no longer reside in a utopian "dreaming forwards", but in its exact contrary: in the *catastrophic* anticipation. The optimistic conception of history that underlies Bloch's philosophy of utopia cannot be sustained anymore, as pointed out by Adorno and Horkheimer, and especially by Günther Anders. However,

even if the future is eclipsed, Blochian *objective phantasy* is to be saved, even if it needs to be turned upside down. Because theoretical anticipation in imagination, moved whether by hope or *Angst*, needs to become practical anticipation (that for Bloch meant nothing else but the Revolution), that requires *courage*: before the explosion, "the lighted fuse must be cut."

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Tytuł: Antycypacja jako krytyka: obiektywna fantazja od Ernsta Blocha do Günthera Andersa

Abstrakt: Celem artykułu jest interpretacja roli, jaką w tradycji teorii krytycznej pełni „obiektywna fantazja", ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem myśli Ernsta Blocha, jak również interpretacja ewolucji użytku, jaki z tej kategorii czynią autorzy tacy jak Marcuse czy Adorno. Naczelną rozważaną funkcją fantazji jest jej zdolność do wykraczania poza obecny stan rzeczy (co umożliwia antypozytywistyczna koncepcja prawdy w ramach teorii krytycznej) oraz do *antycypacji*. Ten antycypacyjny aspekt fantazji zależy, jak próbujemy wykazać, od refleksji na temat *afektów związanych z wyczekiwaniem*. W końcu, w artykule przeciwstawione zostają dwa modele antycypacyjnej wyobraźni (wykazuje się też ich wzajemne powiązanie): model utopijny (formułowany przede wszystkim przez Blocha) oraz jego przeciwieństwo – antycypacja katastroficzna, która przyjmuje swoją najbardziej radykalną formę w rozważaniach Günthera Andersa na temat ery atomowej oraz której palącą aktualność staramy się podkreślić.
Słowa kluczowe: obiektywna fantazja, antycypacja, Ernst Bloch, Günther Anders

SEBASTIAN TRUSKOLASKI

"Etwas Fehlt": Marxian Utopias in Bloch and Adorno

During a radio debate in 1964, Bloch and Adorno clashed over the status of Utopia in Marx's thinking. In particular, the disagreement concerned the possibilities (or, rather, limitations) of picturing – with Marx and beyond Marx – a condition in which all societal antagonisms have been reconciled. It is telling, then, that their conversation quickly came to turn on a surprising term: the Old Testament interdiction against making images of God. Given both authors' commitment to an ostensibly secular critique of capitalist modernity, the prominence of this figure, which is emblematic of the decades-long exchange between these authors, invites further questions. What, for instance, are the epistemic and aesthetic conditions under which Bloch and Adorno propose to *present* their Marxian Utopias? By considering these questions in light of issues arising from their debate, and applying it to their writings more generally, my paper aims to contribute to the on-going exploration of "Utopia" in German Critical Theory.

Keywords: Adorno, Bloch, Marx, Utopia, Critical Theory

Marxism, as a political project, has long been derided as "utopian" in the sense of its purported impracticality – an alleged incompatibility with the un- (or *anti*) egalitarian "nature" of human beings that has been presupposed in dominant strands of political theory since at least Locke and Hobbes. The evocation of "Marxian" (or Marx*ist*) *Utopias* in the writings of Ernst Bloch and Theodor W. Adorno is thus somewhat ironic. It is connected to these thinkers' eccentric efforts to mobilise, in their respective ways, the category of Utopia – that ideal non-place once memorably dreamt up by the venerable Renaissance humanist, Thomas More – for their formulation of a broadly Marxian critique of capitalist modernity; a critique, which – for its part – emerged under the sign of Karl Korsch, the young Georg Lukács, and other so-called "Western" Marxists (Elbe 2013). This tendency, it bears emphasising, was inspired both by the aftershocks of WWI (when the fronts between SPD and KPD hardened in the young Weimar Republic) and by the wish to break with the perceived orthodoxies of Soviet Marxism in the wake of its institutionalisation. To be sure, in its exalted manner of imagining a better world, this new wave of German Marxism arguably had more in common with the romantic anti-capitalism of the very young Lukács, or the expressionistic anarchism of Gustav Landauer, than with the views espoused by more traditional Marxists from the orbit of, e.g., the Second International (Löwy 1981). Nevertheless, although it is well known that, later on at least, Lukács and Bloch sympathised with more orthodox variants of Marxism, their broadly messianic disposition – their emphatic yearning for something *radically* different – remains a feature of their work throughout their lives. To this extent, it is worth reappraising the particular status of these Marxian Utopias as a feature of German Critical Theory's political imaginary.

The present paper, then, attempts to make a case for the currency of "Utopia" in on-going debates concerning the political actuality of Marxism, albeit in a qualified sense. In particular, it focuses on the manner in which this issue is treated in the decades-long conversation between Adorno and Bloch, which culminates in a 1964 broadcast debate, published under the Brechtian heading "Etwas fehlt" – *something's missing*. To this end, the paper will proceed in three steps: (1) An account of Bloch's characterisation of Utopia; (2) An account of Adorno's criticism of Bloch; (3) A reflection on the wider status of such "Marxian" Utopias in contemporary Critical Theory and beyond.

However, before proceeding to a fuller discussion of these points, it is worth noting that the effort to mobilise Utopia in the context of any self-consciously Marxian project is "eccentric" for at least two reasons:

firstly, because, as is well known, Marx himself was highly critical of the concept of Utopia, at least to the extent that he associated it with the work of what he and Engels called the "Utopian Socialists": principally Henri de Saint-Simon, Charles Fourier and Robert Owen (Engels 1989). It is true, of course, that Marx and Engels share many aspects of these thinkers' diagnoses concerning the ills of industrial modernity, as is clear from works such as *The Holy Family* or *The Manifesto of the Communist Party*; however, they differ significantly in their views concerning the practical means by which societal transformation might occur. "Such fantastic pictures of future society" which are "painted," by the Utopian Socialists, "at a time when the proletariat is still in a very undeveloped state and has but a fantastic conception of its own position, correspond with the first instinctive yearning of that class for a general reconstruction of society" (Marx and Engels 1976, 515). In other words, "utopian socialism […] is praised for its original criticism of capitalism" but is in turn "patronised for its ineffectual solutions at a time when it was too young to know any better, and castigated for being effectively reactionary when its historical relevance had superseded" (Levitas 1990, 61). In particular, Marx and Engels objected to the "fantastic" dimension of the "pictures" in question, to "writing recipes for the cook-shops of the future" (Marx and Engels 1996, 17),[1] emphasising, instead, the need for a thoroughgoing criticism of the present. Their objections were directed not against the underlying impulse informing these thinker's social utopias, but rather (and paradoxically enough, in the present context) against the abstractness of their approach. Accordingly, in the 1960s, Bloch defends a utopian orientation for Marxism by arguing that:

> The mandate, or rather, the operative maxim, which was necessary for Marx so as not to say more about the utopian was merely polemical. It held sway for some period of time, short or long; it was directed against the abstract Utopians, who were his forerunners, and who believed that one only had to appeal to the conscience of the rich and they would begin to saw off the branch on which they were sitting. (Adorno and Bloch 1988, 8)[2]

In other words, "the commandment against a concrete expression of utopia tends to defame the utopian consciousness and to engulf it. What is really important, however, is the will *that* things be different" (Adorno and Bloch 1988, 11):[3] a criticism of the present for the sake

1 Translation altered.
2 Translation altered.
3 My emphasis.

of a prospective concretisation of something that differs categorically from the status quo, instead of a regulative (and hence "abstract") ideal for reform.

Secondly, the "mobilisation" of Utopia (or, to put it in less martial terms, its *re-purposing*) is "eccentric," in the sense of "not centred." Insofar as its apparent linchpin – Marx*ism* – itself undergoes considerable recalibrations at the hands of Bloch, in particular, and (albeit with a different emphasis) Adorno as well; not least in its rejection of certain Marx*ist* conceptions of teleology. All that is to say: in the present context, both the epithet "Marxian" and the idea of "Utopia" require considerable qualification.

But how, then, are we to make sense of the "Marxian Utopias" that, I argue, lie at the hearts of both Bloch and Adorno's philosophies, albeit in different ways? What methodological devices do these authors draw on? And what do the differences in their approaches – mediated, as they are, by the quasi-theological undertone common to both authors – tell us about the status of specifically Marxian Utopias in their work, and (by extension) today?

1.

In the aforementioned broadcast debate with Adorno, Bloch provides a useful literary-historical point of departure for exploring the questions listed above. He argues as follows:

> At the very beginning Thomas More designated utopia as a place, an island in the distant South Seas. This designation underwent changes later so that it left space and entered time. Indeed, the Utopians, especially those of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, transposed the wishland more into the future. In other words, there is a transformation of the topos from space into time. With Thomas More, the wishland was still complete, on a distant island; only *I* am not there. On the other hand, when it is transposed into the future, not only am I not there but rather utopia itself is not at one with itself. This island does not exist, but at the same time it is not simply nonsense or absolute fancy; rather it is *not yet* in the sense of a possibility – that it could be there if we could only do something about it. (Adorno and Bloch 1988, 2)[4]

The central conceptual difficulty of figuring Utopia as, in a Kantian sense, a *place* in *time*, and, moreover – in a Marxian manner – as the

4 Translation altered.

prospective, practical overcoming of real societal antagonisms in this locality (or shall we say at this moment that is "not yet"?) immediately becomes apparent: how can something – *etwas* – that, in Bloch's words, "does not exist" be anticipated by extant means, be they discursive or otherwise, without getting embroiled in contradiction? As we will find, for all their commonalities – and, certain spectacular personal animosities aside, there surely are many – Adorno and Bloch differ decisively on *this* point, let us call it, following Benjamin, a question of *Darstellung*:[5] the presentation, indeed the present-*ability* of Utopia (Weber 2010).

Some 35 years before the aforementioned conversation with Adorno, Bloch stages this difficulty in a passage from his celebrated collection of philosophical prose, *Traces*, in which he describes a conversation between a "Communist" and an unspecified "somebody"; "somebody who had time for the proletariat and had done much with them, in other words not a hostile or even unfriendly figure, but rather a mournful one" (Bloch 2006, 17). Speaking to "the Communist," this "somebody" says:

> A bourgeois was hidden in the *citoyen*; God save us from what's hidden in the comrade. He added: That's why you [the Communist, *ST*] are so careful too,

5 The term *Darstellung* – presentation – is used advisedly here. It is expounded at length in the "Epistemo-Critical Preface" to Benjamin's ill-fated Habilitation on the *Origin of the German Trauerspiel* (1928), a text that both Adorno and Bloch knew well. For its part, the text can be viewed as the summative statement of Benjamin's early philosophical project. Although *Darstellung* defies easy summary (in Benjamin's "Prologue" it is to do with the presentation of what he calls *ideas*), one way of approaching this term in the present context is as follows: Adorno (arguably more than Bloch) inherits from Benjamin a conviction – shared, in a different way, by Heidegger – that traditional modes of philosophising do a kind of violence to what might cautiously be called "phenomena": the lived stuff of experience. To the extent that philosophy does not do justice to "phenomena" qua knowledge, i.e. in the guise of conceptual thought, it is taken to be incapable of entering into a relation with *truth* (which is, after all, its stated aim). This is the case insofar as truth here means something like a non-coercive mode of relating to the world. Knowledge, on this reading, is problematic insofar as it subsumes particulars under universals and thus obfuscates their inimitability. The central problem of philosophy thus becomes how to recast its own established methods of apprehension and (re)presentation in a manner that resists this in-built tendency to coercion, since even the language in which it is articulated is seen as complicit with the problem it is trying to overcome. For Adorno, in particular, there is no positive set of terms *beyond* extant discursive conventions with which this aim could be achieved. Accordingly, the "truth" that philosophy is supposed to articulate cannot be positively figured but only negatively intimated. It is in this regard that the question of *Darstellung* becomes integral to any discussion of how Bloch, Benjamin or Adorno propose to "conceptualise" the question of Utopia (see Benjamin 2019).

> and never want to say what this new world will look like. Instead you're precise like Prussians, all order of the day, but if someone wants to know what kind of society is supposed to break through here, you all become Austrian, postpone everything till tomorrow, even the day after. In 1789, when the third estate was revolutionary, one didn't need to be so formal, not such a cautious dreamer. (…) Now, as cautiously as you consider the future, you still dream constantly of the miracle in the working class; here you are utter believers. Here you don't pursue just the sober abolition of want and exploitation but paint the whole person, the new person, into the undecided setting (Bloch 2006, 17).

"Thus", Bloch tells us "spoke this irascible man, and was homeless" (Bloch 2006, 17). The allusion to the *topos*, indeed the *u-topos*, of the "home" is arresting here not least in light of Lukács's conception of modernity as a condition of "transcendental homelessness" (Lukács 1988, 61). What would it mean for the self-estranged "somebody" – a "mournful" figure with no name – to be at home, (*bei sich*), in a *place* in the *future* in the guise of a *new person*? And how can this condition be presented? A cryptic summary of what might be presumed to be Bloch's own position emerges between the lines of the Communist's response to "somebody": a "comrade could never disappoint," in the way that the *citoyen* is said to have done, "[f]or he *represents* nothing at all" (Bloch 2006, 18). The passage continues:

> In the triumph of the bourgeoisie we have what great words, even human values, mean when the base is not in order. Whereas the proletariat is the only class that does not want to be one; it does not and certainly could not claim to be particularly grand as such; every kind of *Proletkult* is false, and a bourgeois infection. It claims only that it will provide the key to the larder of humanity when it is abolished; yet it does not claim to carry, let alone to be, this larder. In its dehumanization it teaches, with radical precision, that there has never yet been human life, but always just economic life, which drives human beings about, making them false, making them slaves, but also exploiters. What comes then? At least no exploiter will jump out; indeed, if something worse happens, the table will at least have been cleared, and we will have at face value what free men and women are about, or not yet. Even without poverty we will be sufficiently unlike ourselves, or falsely conditioned; there will be misfortune, sorrow, fate enough, and no elixir against death. But what's in the comrade: that will truly be in him, and not in the relations that deform us even worse than we are. Thus spoke the Communist, shocking even his friend, and was finally not such a believer – for humanity is something that has yet to be discovered. (Bloch 2006, 18)

A number of central themes arise here: the dialectic of *citoyen* and *bourgeois*, for instance; or the allusion to an "elixir against death," which is taken up some decades later in the aforementioned conversation with Adorno by way of a discussion of Heidegger. More centrally, though, in the guise of the "Communist," Bloch makes a startling observation: that humankind, in its state of alienation – in its state of *homelessness* – is not yet itself. "That there has never yet been human life" presumably means that the conditions for its possible emergence (in the *house* of humanity?) must still be forged. Bloch attributes this constructive role to a reluctant proletariat, the class that "does not want to be one," and which (through revolutionary action?) will not so much usher in a golden age, as it will – instead – "clear the table," in Bloch's words, thus creating a situation in which current injustices will be uncovered and a path to the "discovery of humanity" will be laid. As Bloch will say many years later: "Marxism in its entirety, even when brought in its most illuminating form and anticipated in its entire realization, is only a condition for a life in freedom, life in happiness, life in possible fulfilment, life with content" (Adorno and Bloch 1988, 2).

Returning to the question as to how Bloch responds to the problem of presenting Utopia without betraying its vital impulse, it is worth noting what, as the title of his collection – *Traces* – already suggests, his *modus operandi* seems to entail: tracing the errant, overgrown paths to salvation in history, unearthing the tracks to a home for housing the homeless (or at least a plot to lay this home's foundation). This approach is captured in Bloch's concept of *Vorschein*, a mode of anticipatory consciousness, wherein art – in particular – exceeds, at the level of semblance (*Schein*), a present reality that is deemed lacking, thus gesturing forward (*vorwärts*) into a future that yet to be filled in. As Bloch puts it in *The Principle of Hope*: "Art is a laboratory and also a feast of implemented possibilities, together with the thoroughly experienced alternatives therein, whereby the implementation and the result occur in the manner of founded appearance, namely of worldly perfected pre-appearance [*Vor-Schein*]" (Bloch 1995, 216). To this extent, Gunzelin Schmid-Noerr's characterisation of Bloch's writings as a phenomenology of anticipatory consciousness is surely apt (Schmid-Noerr 2001): a vast array of images drawn from dreams, fairy tales, art, and the detritus of consumer culture, each containing the promise of a radical societal transformation that is holding out for the clearing of the aforementioned "table" in order to release its transformative energies; not the image of redeemed life *per se*, but the trace of its promise.

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2.

In a 1965 essay, included in a collection honouring Bloch on the occasion of his 80th birthday, Adorno makes a similar point as the one outlined above with reference to another well-known Blochian image, namely: that of the pitcher (or pot, as the English translation would have it), from the opening passages of *Spirit of Utopia* (Bloch 2000, 3). As he writes:

> What Bloch is after is this: if one really knew what the pot in its thing-like language is saying and concealing at the same time, then one would know what ought to be known and what the discipline of civilizing thought, climaxing in the authority of Kant, has forbidden consciousness to ask. This secret would be the opposite of what has always been and always will be, the opposite of invariance: something that would finally be different. (Adorno 1992, 219)

"The opposite of what has always been and always will be," "something that would finally be different" can, I think, in this instance be taken to mean Utopia – "the larder of humanity" – to which the "proletariat" in *Spuren* is said to hold the "key" without actually embodying it. The situation of a revolutionary *tabula rasa*, on this reading, would presumably entail that the "thing-like language" of the pitcher (or pot) – its "secret," as it were – would become legible (or audible?) at least to the extent that this new manner of relating to the world of things would allow human beings to reconceive of their relations with each other. In this regard, a path toward a re-imagination of social relations, qua subject-object relations (distorted, as they are, under capitalism), will have been forged. This brings into focus a peculiarity of Bloch's thinking, namely: the presumed homology between a kind of epistemic operation, on the one hand (represented here, for better or worse, by Kant), and reified social relations, on the other. The metaphorical thrust appears to be that if only one knew "what the pot … is saying and concealing at the same time," then this would reveal "what would finally be different" – not least, presumably, at the level of the social world. Thus, arguably, social relations are coded here as – for want of a better term – subject-object relations. Utopia would be to know the pot non-violently, and (by extension) to interact with the world at large – including one's fellow humans – in a manner that is figured as utopian. At any rate Adorno has misgivings about Bloch's view: such thinking, "[t]hinking that follows narrative trails," he chides in a long form review of the 1959 re-edition of *Traces*, "is … like the apocryphal model of the adventure story about

the journey to a utopian goal, a model for which Bloch would like to create a radiant image," an "image of the house in which one would be at home, inside, no longer estranged" (Adorno 1992, 202). Like the pathfinder evoked by his favourite storyteller, Karl May, Bloch's "Communist" could thus be seen as treading on a secret trail that is obscured by deformed social relations, which – for their part – must be cleared through active intervention in the historical process.

Adorno's reference to a "house" is telling in this context, not only because of the Lukácsian figure of a "transcendental homelessness," alluded to earlier, or – for that matter – because the customary place of the pitcher may well be seen as being in a "home" of sorts; rather, the "home," here, designates a mode of pre-empting what it might mean to be *at* home in the world, to borrow a Heideggerian idiom. It too functions as a kind of *Vorschein*. This view resonates with some passages from Bloch's 1964 discussion with Adorno, which crystallise their disagreement, thus allowing us to pivot to a discussion of Adorno's own views concerning Utopia: "[i]n the Baroque Age," Bloch says, "most of all in the Viennese Baroque theatre, there were tremendous buildings that could never be inhabited because they were built out of cardboard and illusion, but they nevertheless made an appearance" (Bloch and Adorno 1988, 5). The interplay of "illusion" and "appearance" is telling here. "[Il]lusions," we are told, "have become necessary for life in a world completely devoid of a utopian consciousness and utopian presentiment" (Adorno and Bloch 1988, 5).[6] (As noted above, in Bloch's estimation Marx's condemnation of the "Utopian Socialists" was merely strategic and no longer tenable in his day – even if the proletariat explicitly "represents nothing." It is conceivable, then, that Bloch is suspicious of the kind of "tactical" caution in daring to dream, which he describes as a consequence of the 1789 revolution.) With respect to the category of an "illusion" that nonetheless "appears" (*schöner Schein*, along with its intimate relation to *Vorschein*), Adorno notes that "the narrator's victorious tone", which he ascribes to Bloch's *Traces* overall, "is inseparable from the substance of his", that is Bloch's, "philosophy, the rescuing of illusion" – the anticipation, in semblance, of being at home in the world figured as the "cardboard" buildings of Viennese Baroque theatre (Adorno 1992, 204). Bloch, Adorno argues, "can only grasp utopia as something illusionary" (Adorno 1992, 208).

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Turning now to Adorno's position, it is worth acknowledging – for starters – that his backhanded compliment to Bloch could just as easily

6 Translation altered.

be applied to his own work, for example to the confounding topography of "Finale," the famous closing aphorism from his *Minima Moralia* with its "standpoint of redemption" (Truskolaski 2017). This question of "topography," of a fully furnished *u-topic* "standpoint," is – according to Adorno – the "innermost antinomy" of Bloch's philosophy (Adorno 1992, 213). It marks the beating heart of his objection to Bloch, which – in turn – throws into relief (ostensibly, at least) his own "Marxian Utopia," if one can call it that. "A heretic when it comes to the dialectic, Bloch is not to be bought off with the materialist thesis that a classless society should not be depicted. With unwavering sensuousness," and against his stated intentions, "he delights in the image of that society" (Adorno 1992, 214).

It is between these lines that Adorno gives a good indication of his own position. He discusses Utopia with regards to the prospective overcoming of death, which he describes as "the absolute anti-utopia" (Adorno and Bloch 1998, 7).

> There is something profoundly contradictory in every utopia, namely, that it cannot be conceived at all without the elimination of death […]. Wherever […] the threshold of death is not at the same time considered, there can actually be no utopia. And it seems to me that this has very heavy consequences for the theory of knowledge about utopia – if I may put it crassly: one may not cast a picture of utopia in a positive manner. Every attempt to describe or portray utopia in a simple way, i.e., it will be like this, would be an attempt to avoid the antinomy of death and to speak about the elimination of death as if death did not exist. That is perhaps the most profound reason, the metaphysical reason, why one can actually talk about utopia only in a negative way, as is demonstrated in great philosophical works by Hegel and, even more emphatically, Marx […]. What is meant there is the prohibition of casting a picture of utopia actually for the sake of utopia, and that has a deep connection to the commandment, "Thou shalt not make a graven image!" (Adorno and Bloch 1988, 10)

What transpires in this passage is the manner in which Adorno seeks to mobilise "the prohibition of casting a picture," a theological motif, so as to bolster his view that Utopia can only be sought in the determinate negation of "everything that exists" (Marx 1975,142), to quote Marx's famous 1844 letter to Ruge. Setting aside Adorno's peculiar re-imagination of the driving force behind Hegel's thought (and, moreover, Marx's), there are at least two points worth noting in this regard. The first point is epistemic: for Adorno, Utopia at once *demands* a kind of discursive elaboration and *defies* it; and in the absence of a fully formu-

lated set of terms with which to articulate Utopia – a "Utopia of cognition" (Adorno 1973, 10)[7] – philosophy (indeed, *all* intellectual endeavour) can only hope to intimate "the wholly other" through a criticism of the status quo (Horkheimer 1970, 81).[8] After all, if one were to positively "portray utopia," then this would merely amount to an extension of what already exists. The second (related) point is, in a qualified sense, materialistic: it is to do with Adorno's reference to "the antinomy of death." "Knowledge of Utopia," in the emphatic sense intended by Adorno, would include – in a sublated, determinately negated form – death itself, not "as a scientific process" whereby "one crosses the threshold between organic and inorganic life," but rather as the experience of a negativity, which, for its part, throws into relief its opposite. That is why "the idea of Utopia" both demands the abolition of death and sustains it (Adorno and Bloch 1988, 9). Death is no *abstractum*. Knowledge of it is, as it were, bodily; and the positive side of this bodily knowledge (which, in keeping with the image ban, Adorno cannot allow himself to positively outline) is the obverse of the coercive mechanisms of thought that he is criticising. One might think of it in terms of a mimetic faculty (Benjamin 1999, 720-722).

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It exceeds the scope of the present paper to sketch in more detail the outlines of this Adornian theory of knowledge (if, indeed, it is one) – the part of his work that tacitly outlines a different mode of thinking. What bears emphasising, though, is the sense in which his decision to invoke the image ban at all is strange in the context of a conversation about Marx, not least because of its ostensibly religious rooting. Nevertheless, it occurs against the backdrop of a much longer tradition of citing this figure that spans the history of modern German thought – from Kant to Hegel and Hermann Cohen (Kant 2000, 156; Hegel 1975, 159; Cohen 1995, 50-58). To be sure, the image ban's connection with Marxism is no less eccentric than the invocation of Utopia, though Adorno's entire *corpus* can, in a sense, be read as proposing this connection: a continuous quest for a truth that recedes whenever one attempts firmly to grasp it, and which nonetheless demands a kind of *Darstellung*. Without presuming to decide whether Adorno's objections to Bloch are viable, or – for that matter – whether such a resolutely negative view of Utopia is in any sense more practicable than the one outlined by the "Communist" in Bloch's *Traces*, it does appear that this issue – the matter of a thinking-in-images – marks a decisive difference in the way

7 Translation altered.
8 My translation.

that these two thinkers conceptualise the *presentation* of the radically Other. (It is telling that Adorno's objections to Bloch closely recall those levelled in the mid-1930s against the other mentors from his youth, Walter Benjamin and Siegfried Kracauer – insufficiently dialectical, too positive, etc.) Nevertheless, the question remains as to what this apparent disagreement reveals about the currency of Utopia for the formulation of any Marxian position today.

3.

Leaving behind these largely historical considerations, I propose to conclude on the following note: if Adorno and Bloch disagree on the present-ability of Utopia in the 1960s, and if they consider the strategic currency of portrayals of Utopia in a range of historical settings (from the French Revolution to the post-war Federal Republic), then perhaps one question that follows from reading these texts in the present is whether – and in what sense – the issue continues to play out in practice. I take it that any response to this question, however cursory, has to note at least two issues: the first is a modest point concerning the present state of Critical Theory in its codified, institutional form; the second is a largely speculative point concerning "our" political imaginaries, not least of all in places like Britain, where I happen to be writing these lines shortly before the UK's departure from the EU.

As for the former: it is hardly controversial to observe that the emphasis of Critical Theory (in the "official" sense) changed markedly following the deaths of prominent figures from the orbit of the Frankfurt School's so-called "first" generation – Horkheimer, Adorno, Marcuse, etc. What followed, as many commentators have pointed out, was a foregrounding of questions that might be broadly collected under the heading of "normativity": the view that first-generation Critical Theory "cannot really justify what makes the ideals from its own culture chosen to be a reference point normatively defensible or desirable in the first place" (Honneth 2009, 50). These "ideals," which are characterised as unjustifiable, indefensible and undesirable, seem to me to mean precisely the orientation towards Utopia, which, as I have sought to show, is so characteristic of the "old" Frankfurt School. That is to say, more recent forms of Frankfurt School Critical Theory have abandoned the impetus to salvage a concept of Utopia in favour of seeking the well-reasoned grounds for a less exalted kind of politics. To be sure, this article is not the place to settle the matter. Nevertheless, it is perhaps worth noting – if only

anecdotally – that this controversy recently flared up again in the wake of an article by Raymond Geuss, published on the occasion of Jürgen Habermas's 90th birthday.[9] According to Geuss, "as early as the beginning of the 1970s, the unofficial successor of Adorno as head of the school, Jürgen Habermas […] began his project of rehabilitating a neo-Kantian version of liberalism" (as opposed to Marxism), ostensibly "by having recourse to a normatively highly charged concept of 'discourse'" (Geuss 2019). By "discourse," Geuss means "the idea that there are historically invariant structures that are capable of generating normativity endogenously" (Geuss 2019). These "structures" – necessary to "justify" the otherwise ill-founded project of Critical Theory – are, according to Geuss's reading of Habermas, supposed to be synonymous with "communication" (Geuss 2019). In short: the negative thrust of, say, Adorno's or Bloch's approach is ultimately groundless, making it – at best – utopian (in the sense of a wishful longing for something totally different), and – at worst – nihilistic (as in: unwilling to concede the possibility of reaching political consensus through reasoned debate). Habermas's appeal to communication is "liberal," according to Geuss, because it presumes "that free and uncontrolled discussion will always contribute to clarifying and resolving problematic situations, and that," moreover, "it is, at least 'in principle' always possible to attain consensus," which – we might add – advances the freedoms of those concerned (Geuss 2019). As Geuss points out, however,

> No amount of human exertion will suffice to permit us to establish within the domain of the natural phenomenon "communication" a safe-zone that is actually completely protected on all sides from the possible use of force, nor can we even realistically anticipate in some *utopian* sense a form of communication where relations of domination were completely suspended or cancelled out. Even if, as Habermas suggests, there is something in the "inherent logic" of speech that "implies" freedom from domination, any particular theory that tries to claim that it is insulated against history and the real existing forms of communication will eventually turn out to do nothing more than absolutize some contingent features of our present situation (Geuss 2019).

In other words, there is, according to Geuss, something ultimately implausible about supplanting the utopian (read: unjustifiable) orien-

9 Geuss's article was followed by a series of responses from Seyla Benhabib, Martin Jay, James Gordon Finlayson, and others, to which Geuss – in turn – responded in another polemical piece.

tation of Critical Theory with an appeal to the "endogenous normativity" of *communication*. Indeed, communication, on this view, is itself "utopian," as he puts it. The point, though, is not, strictly speaking, a philosophical one. Rather, Geuss stakes a historical claim, namely: that the era which gave rise to Habermas's model of communicative action, and thus to the move away from first-generation Critical Theory, is itself drawing to a close. Habermas's theory, he suggests, is a direct outbirth of the politics of post-1945 reconstruction. However, he continues, in the face of a changing economic and political landscape (in Germany and beyond), the stakes have shifted: "When I talk with Brexiteers," for instance, "I" – that is, Geuss – "certainly do not assume that what Habermas calls the 'power of the better argument'," concerning – for instance – the threat of rampant public-sector privatisation in the UK after Brexit, "will be irresistible" (Geuss 2019). And, he goes on to say, "I am certainly very far from assuming that an indefinite discussion conducted under ideal circumstances would eventually free them" – i.e. Brexiteers – "from the" perceived "cognitive and moral distortions from which they" are said to "suffer," thus leading, in the end, "to a consensus between them and me. What makes situations like this difficult," Geuss asserts, "is that arguments are relatively ineffectual against" the now dominant "appeals to 'identity'," German, British or otherwise (Geuss 2019). Whatever one makes of Geuss's views on Brexit, his point is – I think – in keeping with a precept of first-generation Critical Theory: liberalism did not deliver on its promise, and now it has little to offer except for appeals to reasoned debate. Against this backdrop, my suggestion is as follows: if we take Geuss's (admittedly polemical) claims seriously, might it not be said that the "strategic" abstention from relying on fully-formed paradigms, such as a theory of communicative action, is prudent at a time when models of this sort have proven themselves to be ineffectual against an identity-driven push to the right? If so, then this view has ramifications beyond the context of Critical Theory.

This leads me to the second point announced above. To be sure, calls for far-reaching social change – Marxian or otherwise – have proliferated in the wake of the economic crises of 2008-9: from "Occupy Wall Street" to "Fridays for Future," and from the "Arab Spring" to Poland's "Black Friday" marches, to name only a few examples. In some instances, it might be argued, these protests proceeded principally from an urgent criticism of the current political moment; at other times, they seem have had a broader thrust. Amongst the latter, some appear in the guise of a *Fully Automated Luxury Communism* or, more modestly, as

the *Clear Bright Future* of post-capitalism; for instance, as ideas of a universal basic income enabled by technological advancements in the fields of robotics and artificial intelligence that are, for their part, placed in public ownership (Bastani 2019; Mason 2016). To be sure, these considerations are nothing if not timely. Nonetheless, they touch on problems concerning their own presentation, indeed, their own present--ability; problems – I would argue – that touch directly on the topic of Adorno's conversation with Bloch. Accordingly, one might ask whether it is not, in fact, advisable, in this context, to return to an older view of Critical Theory: to *temper* our utopian longing, rather than painting fully-fledged pictures of a land of plenty (or to suggest that we can simply talk things out), and to recall, instead, Marx's demand for a materialist critique of the present – neither the self-consciously normative Utopia of communication, nor that of robotic automation. This may not be a prescription valid for all times; but it is at least conceivable that – as in Marx's day – the problem of the political Left *today* is less to do with a failure of the imagination (in its precise derivation from the Latin *imago*), and more with a tendency to over-determine the future in terms that stem firmly from the present. It is in this sense that "the prohibition of casting a picture of utopia" might be seen as actually occurring "for the sake of utopia" (Adorno and Bloch 1988, 10).

This may not be a prescription valid for all times; but it is at least conceivable that – as in Marx's day – the problem of the political Left *today* is less to do with a failure of the imagination (in its precise derivation from the Latin *imago*), and more with a tendency to over-determine the future in terms that stem firmly from the present.

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Tytuł: „Etwas fehlt": Marksowskie utopie w myśli Blocha i Adorna

Abstrakt: Podczas debaty radiowej w 1964 Bloch i Adorno starli się w kwestii statusu utopii w myśli Marksa. Brak zgody dotyczył zwłaszcza możliwości (czy raczej granic) przedstawienia – z Marksem i przekraczając Marksa – stanu, w którym wszystkie antagonizmy społeczne zostaną pojednane. Znamienne, że ich rozmowa szybko zeszła na zaskakujący temat: starotestamentowy zakaz czynienia wizerunków Boga. Biorąc pod uwagę przywiązanie obu autorów do rzekomo świeckiej krytyki kapitalistycznej nowoczesności, znaczenie tej figury, charakterystyczne dla trwającej dziesięciolecia dyskusji między tymi dwoma autorami, prowokuje do dalszych pytań. Jakie, na przykład, są proponowane przez Blocha i Adorno epistemiczne i estetyczne warunki, mające umożliwić *przedstawienie* ich Marksowskich utopii? Poprzez rozważenie tych kwestii w świetle problemów wypływających ze wskazanej debaty

i zastosowanie ich do innych prac Blocha i Adorna chcę przyczynić się do trwającej eksploracji tematyki „utopii“ w niemieckiej teorii krytycznej.
Słowa kluczowe: Adorno, Bloch, Marks, Utopia, Teoria Krytyczna