

Ernst Bloch, Utopia and Ideology Critique

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The great utopian Marxist philosopher Ernst Bloch developed a method of cultural criticism which expands conventional Marxian approaches to culture and ideology and provides one of the richest treasure houses of ideology critique to found in the Marxian tradition. In this article, I want to suggest how Bloch provides a method for discerning and criticizing ideological content in theories, philosophies, and cultural artifacts whose ideological nature and effects are often overlooked. Bloch's practice of ideological criticism discerns emancipatory utopian dimensions even in ideological products, ferreting out those aspects that might be useful for radical theory and practice. Bloch therefore provides exciting methods of cultural criticism, a new approach to cultural history, and novel perspectives on culture and ideology. He also contributes uniquely distinctive perspectives on Marxism, socialism, and revolutionary theory, though that will not be my focus in this study.[0]

Reading "The Principle of Hope"

Now that Bloch's magnificent *magnus opus* *The Principle of Hope* has been translated, his mature philosophy is accessible to English-speaking readers.[1] Problems in appropriating Bloch and using him for cultural and political analysis and critique remain significant, however, as Bloch's text is extremely difficult, elusive, and extremely long (over 1,400 pages in the English translation). Consequently, if Bloch is to have any real impact on political and cultural analysis in the English-speaking world, efforts must be made to explain and interpret what he is up to, and convincing arguments must be provided by us to persuade people that reading Bloch is worth the time and effort.

The Principle of Hope contains three volumes, divided into five parts, and fifty-five chapters. The three volumes roughly correspond to Hegel's division of his system into interrogations of subjective, objective, and absolute spirit. The first volume queries "Little Daydreams" (Part One), "Anticipatory Consciousness" (Part Two) and "Wishful Images in the Mirror" (Part Three). The latter studies analyze the utopian dimensions of fashion, advertising, display, fairy tales, travel, film, theater, jokes, and other cultural phenomena. The second volume (Part IV) depicts "Outlines of a Better World," focusing on social and political utopias, including technological, architectural, and geographical utopias, as well as quests for world peace and a life of leisure. Volume three (Part Five) discusses "Wishful Images of the Fulfilled Moment," including morality, music, images of death, religion, morning-land of nature, and the highest good.

Just as Hegel's philosophy articulated the odyssey of spirit through history and culture, so too does Bloch's philosophy chart the vicissitudes of hope. For Bloch, hope permeates everyday

consciousness and its articulation in cultural forms, ranging from the fairy tale to the great philosophical and political utopias. For Bloch, individuals are unfinished, they are animated by "dreams of a better life," and by utopian longings for fulfillment. The "something better" for which people yearn is precisely the subject-matter of Bloch's massive *The Principle of Hope*, which provides a systematic examination of the ways that daydreams, fairy tales and myths, popular culture, literature, theater, and all forms of art, political and social utopias, philosophy, and religion -- often dismissed tout court as ideology by some Marxist ideological critique -- contain emancipatory moments which project visions of a better life that put in question the organization and structure of life under capitalism (or state socialism).

Bloch urges us to grasp the three dimensions of human temporality: he offers us a dialectical analysis of the past which illuminates the present and can direct us to a better future. The past -- what has been -- contains both the sufferings, tragedies and failures of humanity -- what to avoid and to redeem -- and its unrealized hopes and potentials -- which could have been and can yet be. For Bloch, history is a repository of possibilities that are living options for future action, therefore what could have been can still be. The present moment is thus constituted in part by latency and tendency: the unrealized potentialities that are latent in the present, and the signs and foreshadowings that indicate the tendency of the direction and movement of the present into the future. This three-dimensional temporality must be grasped and activated by an anticipatory consciousness that at once perceives the unrealized emancipatory potential in the past, the latencies and tendencies of the present, and the realizable hopes of the future. Above all, Bloch develops a philosophy of hope and the future, a dreaming forward, a projection of a vision of a future kingdom of freedom. It is his conviction that only when we project our future in the light of what is, what has been, and what could be can we engage in the creative practice that will produce a world in which we are at home and realize humanities deepest dreams.

In his magnum opus, Bloch carries through both a thorough examination of the ways that hope and visions of a better world exist in everything from daydreams to the great religions, and cultural studies which trace throughout history anticipatory visions of what would later be systematized, packaged, and distributed as socialism by Karl Marx and his followers. Consequently, Bloch provides a critical hermeneutic of the ways that cultural history and socio-economic developments point to socialism as the realization of humanities deepest dreams and hopes, and that encourages us to look for the progressive and emancipatory content of cultural artifacts (rather than the merely ideological and mystificatory).

Bloch's Concept of Ideology Critique

I think that Bloch is most useful today in providing a model of cultural theory and ideology critique that is quite different from, and arguably better than, dominant models which present ideology critique as the demolition of bourgeois culture and ideology, thus, in effect, conflating bourgeois culture and ideology. This model -- found in Lenin and most Marxist-Leninists like Althusser, but also to some extent in the Frankfurt School -- interprets dominant ideology primarily as instruments of mystification, error, and domination which are contrasted to science

or Marxist theory, or "Critical Theory." The function of ideology critique on this model is simply to demonstrate the errors, mystifications, and ruling class interest within ideological artifacts which are then smashed and discarded by the heavy hammer of the ideology critic.

Such a model is, of course, rooted in Marx's own texts for whom ideology was the ideas of the ruling class, ideas which legitimated bourgeois rule, ideas which mystified social conditions, covering over oppression and inequality, and ideas which thus produced false consciousness and furthered bourgeois class domination.[2] Within the Marxian tradition, there is also a more positive concept of ideology, developed by Lenin, which sees socialist ideology as a positive force for developing revolutionary consciousness and promoting socialist development. Bloch, however, is more sophisticated than those who simply denounce all ideology as false consciousness, or who stress the positive features of socialist ideology. Rather, Bloch sees emancipatory-utopian elements in all living ideologies, and deceptive and illusory qualities as well.

For Bloch, ideology is "Janus-faced," two-sided: it contains errors, mystifications, and techniques of manipulation and domination, but it also contains a utopian residue or surplus that can be used for social critique and to advance progressive politics. In addition, to reconstructing and refocusing the theory and practice of ideology critique, Bloch also enables us to see ideology in many phenomena usually neglected by Marxist and other ideology critiques: daydreams, popular literature, architecture, department store displays, sports, or clothing. In this view, ideology pervades the organization and details of everyday life. Thus, ideology critique should be a critique of everyday life, as well as critique of political texts and positions, or the manifestly evident political ideologies of Hollywood films, network television, or other forms of mass-mediated culture.[3]

Previous Marxist theories of ideology, by contrast, tended to equate ideology with texts, with political discourses, and with attempts to mystify class relations and to advance class domination. Ideology critique then, on this model, would simply expose and denounce the textual mechanisms of mystification and would attempt to replace Ideology with Truth. Bloch would dismiss this merely denunciatory approach to ideology critique as "half-enlightenment," which he compares to genuine enlightenment. Half-enlightenment "has nothing but an attitude," i.e. rationalistic dismissal of all mystification, superstition, legend, and so on that does not measure up to its scientific criteria.[4] Genuine enlightenment, on the other hand, criticizes any distortions in an ideological product, but then goes on to take it more seriously, to read it closely for any critical or emancipatory potential. Half-enlightenment deludes itself, first, by thinking that truth and enlightenment can be obtained solely by eliminating error rather than offering something positive and attractive. Indeed, Bloch believes that part of the reasons why the Left was defeated by the Right in Weimar Germany is because the Left tended to focus simply on criticism, on negative denunciations of capitalism and the bourgeoisie, whereas fascism provided a positive vision and attractive alternatives to masses desperately searching for something better.

Against merely negative ideology critique, Bloch urges us to pay close attention to potential

progressive contents within artifacts or phenomena frequently denounced and dismissed as mere ideology. For Bloch, ideology contained an "anticipatory" dimension, in which its discourses, images, and figures produced utopian images of a better world. Utopian elements, however, co-exist with "merely embellishing ones" (148). In some cases, this amounts to a "merely dubious polishing of what exists" (149). Such apologetic functions "reconcile the subject with what exists" (ibid). Such purposes appears above all "in periods of class society which are no longer revolutionary" (ibid). Even in this situation, however, ideologies may contain embellishing elements that anticipate a better world, that express in abstract and idealist fashion the potentialities for a better future. If such ideologies deceive individuals into believing that the present society has already realized such ideals, they serve mystificatory functions, but Bloch's method of cultural criticism also wants us to interrogate these ideologies for their utopian contents, for their anticipations of a better world, which can help us to see what is deficient and lacking in this world and what should be fought for to produce a better (i.e. freer and happier) future.

Bloch therefore restores to radical theory a cultural heritage that is often neglected or dismissed as merely ideology. Critique of ideology, Bloch argues, is not merely unmasking (*Entlarvung*), or de-mystification, but is also uncovering and discovery: revelations of unrealized dreams, lost possibilities, abortive hopes -- that can be resurrected and enlivened and realized in our current situation. Bloch's cultural criticism thus accentuates the positive, the utopian-emancipatory possibilities, the testimony to hopes for a better world. As Habermas dramatically puts it:

What Bloch wants to preserve for socialism, which subsists on scorning tradition, is the tradition of the scorned. In contrast to the unhistorical procedure of Feuerbach's criticism of ideology, which deprived Hegel's 'sublation' (*Aufhebung*) of half of its meaning (forgetting *elevare* and being satisfied with *tollere*), Bloch presses the ideologies to yield their ideas to him; he wants to save that which is true in false consciousness: 'All great culture that existed hitherto has been the foreshadowing of an achievement, inasmuch as images and thoughts can be projected from the ages' summit into the far horizon of the future.'

Bloch believed that even ideological artifacts contain expressions of desire and articulations of needs that radical theory and politics should heed to provide programs and discourses which appeal to deep-seated desires for a better life. Ideologies also provide clues to possibilities for future development and contain a "surplus" or "excess" that is not exhausted in mystification or legitimation. And ideologies may contain normative ideals whereby the existing society can be criticized and models of an alternative society. For example, the notion of the citizen (citizen) in bourgeois ideology with its individual rights, civil liberties, and actively engaged autonomy expressed something more than mere legitimation and apologetics for bourgeois institutions and practices. Bloch takes seriously Marx's position that the task of socialism is to fully realize certain bourgeois ideals. Throughout his life, Bloch argued that Marxism, as it was constituted in its Social Democratic and other leading versions, was vitiated by a one-sided, inadequate, and merely negative approach to ideology.

For Bloch, the problem of ideology "is broached from the side of the problem of cultural inheritance, of the problem as to how works of the superstructure progressively reproduce themselves in cultural consciousness even after disappearance of their social bases" (154). Such notions contain a cultural surplus that lives on and provides a utopian function whereby the ideal can still be translated into a reality and thus be fully realized for the first time. Although for Bloch the primary site of ideology is the cultural superstructure -- philosophy, religion, art, and so on --the superstructure contains a cultural surplus and thus cannot be reduced to mere ideology. For Bloch, the cultural surplus preserves unsatisfied desires and human wishes for a better world and because these wishes are usually not fulfilled they contain contents which remain relevant to a future society which may be able to satisfy these wishes and needs. In other words, ideology contains hints as to what human beings desire and need which can be used to criticize failures to satisfy these needs and to realize these desires in the current society.

Ideology critique thus requires not only demolition but also hermeneutics, for ideology in Bloch's view contains pre-conscious elements or what Bloch calls the "Not-Yet-Conscious." Properly understood, the Not-Yet-Conscious may point to real possibilities for social development and real potentials for human liberation. Bloch tends to present the theory of utopian surplus along historical-materialist lines in terms of the rise and fall of social classes. Utopian surplus generally appears when a class is rising: the ascending class criticizes the previous order and projects a wealth of proposals for social change, as when the bourgeoisie attacked the feudal order for its lack of individual freedom, rights, democracy, and class mobility. Bourgeois critiques of feudalism proliferated, as did revolutionary proposals for a new society. Some of these ideas were incorporated into bourgeois constitutions, declarations of rights, and some were even institutionalized in the bourgeois order.[5]

Thus culture ranges for Bloch from an ideal type of pure ideology to purely non-ideological emancipatory culture. Purely ideological artifacts embellish or legitimate an oppressive existing reality, as when Bloch speaks of ideology as that which excludes all progressive elements (9). Most cultural artifacts, however, contain a mixture of ideology and utopian elements. Since ideologies are rhetorical constructs that attempt to persuade and to convince, they must have a relatively rational and attractive core and thus often contain emancipatory promises or moments. Drawing on Bloch, Fredric Jameson has suggested that mass cultural texts often have utopian moments and proposes that radical cultural criticism should analyze both the social hopes and fantasies in cultural artifacts, as well as the ideological ways in which fantasies are presented, conflicts are resolved, and potentially disruptive hopes and anxieties are managed.[6]

In his reading of *Jaws*, for instance, the shark stands in for a variety of fears (uncontrolled organic nature threatening the artificial society, big business corrupting and endangering community, disruptive sexuality threatening the disintegration of the family and traditional values, and so on) which the film tries to contain through the reassuring defeat of evil by representatives of the current class structure. Yet the film also contains utopian images of family, male-bonding, and adventure, as well as socially critical visions of capitalism which articulate fears that unrestrained big business would inexorably destroy the environment and community.

In Jameson's view, mass culture thus articulates social conflicts, contemporary fears and utopian hopes, and attempts at ideological containment and reassurance. In his view:

works of mass culture cannot be ideological without at one and the same time being implicitly or explicitly Utopian as well: they cannot manipulate unless they offer some genuine shred of content as a fantasy bribe to the public about to be so manipulated. Even the 'false consciousness' of so monstrous a phenomenon of Nazism was nourished by collective fantasies of a Utopian type, in 'socialist' as well as in nationalist guises. Our proposition about the drawing power of the works of mass culture has implied that such works cannot manage anxieties about the social order unless they have first revived them and given them some rudimentary expression; we will now suggest that anxiety and hope are two faces of the same collective consciousness, so that the works of mass culture, even if their function lies in the legitimation of the existing order -- or some worse one -- cannot do their job without deflecting in the latter's service the deepest and most fundamental hopes and fantasies of the collectivity, to which they can therefore, no matter in how distorted a fashion, be found to have given voice.[7]

Film like *Jaws*, for instance, might use utopian images to provide a critique of the loss of community, and its destruction by commercial interests. Popular texts may thus enact social criticism in their ideological scenarios and one of the tasks of radical cultural criticism is to specify utopian, critical, subversive, or oppositional meanings, even within the texts of so-called mass culture. For these artifacts may contain implicit and even explicit critiques of capitalism, sexism, or racism, or visions of freedom and happiness which can provide critical perspectives on the unhappiness and unfreedom in the existing society. *The Deer Hunter*, for instance, though an arguably reactionary text, contains utopian images of community, working class and ethnic solidarity, and personal friendship which provides critical perspectives on the atomism, alienation, and loss of community in everyday life under contemporary capitalism. The utopian images of getting high and horsing around in the drug hootch in *Platoon* provide visions of racial harmony and individual and social happiness which provide a critical perspective on the harrowing war scenes and which code war as a disgusting and destructive human activity. The images of racial solidarity and transcendence in the dance numbers of *Zoot Suit* provide a utopian and critical contrast to the oppression of people of color found in the scenes of everyday and prison life in the film. And the transformation of life in the musical numbers of *Pennies From Heaven* provide critical perspectives on the degradation of everyday life due to the constraints of an unjust and irrational economic system which informs the realist sections of the film.

Ideologies thus pander to human desires, fantasies, anxieties, and hopes and cultural artifacts must address these, if they are to be successful. Ideology and utopia are thus interconnected and culture is saturated with utopian content. On the other hand, ideologies exploit and distort this utopian content and should be criticized to expose their merely embellishing, legitimating, and mystifying elements.

Everyday Life, Human Beings, and Psychology

Certain versions of Marxist ideology critique and half-enlightenment error, Bloch believes, by failing to see the importance of culture in everyday life. A rationalistic ideology critique believes that simply by exposing error and pointing to the truth it can motivate people to action. Such a belief, on Bloch's account, errors both in its overestimation of rationalistic enlightenment and in its underestimation of subrational desires, fantasies, beliefs, and so on. Properly understanding human motivation and psychology, Bloch believes, requires taking fantasy, imagination, wishes, and desires more seriously.

Bloch's thought is rooted in a humanist anthropology which grounds his critique of oppression and emancipatory perspectives. Bloch always begins with the wishing, hopeful, needy, and hungry human being and analyzes what prohibits realization of human desire and fulfillment of human needs. Thus, humanism for Bloch is revolutionary and provides standards for critique and impetus for political action and social change.

Unlike most Marxists, Bloch thus takes human needs, desires, and psychology very seriously. Here Bloch's thinking runs parallel to that of Wilhelm Reich and the Freudo-marxists, though in significant ways it also differs this tendency.[8] For Reich and others urged the communists to pay more attention to sexual needs and desires and unconscious wishes and fears. But they tended to overestimate the role of sexuality in constituting human psychology and motivation, and downplayed such things as hunger, needs for security, home, community, and many other things which Bloch believes that the fascists addressed with more success than the Left.[9]

In *The Principle of Hope*, Bloch carries out an extremely interesting appreciation and critique of Freud, and develops his own psychological theories of imagination, needs, and hope against Freud. In fact, I would think that Bloch could productively be used to develop a marxian anthropology and social psychology today and that his own anthropological and psychological perspectives are deeper and more illuminating than Freudo-marxist approaches associated with the Frankfurt school or contemporary French theory like that of Deleuze and Guattari, Lyotard, and so on. Briefly examining Bloch's critique of Freud will enable us to perceive how he is able to point to ideological tendencies in thinkers and theories often not perceived by standard Marxist ideology critique, as well as articulating Bloch's own distinctive anthropological-psychological perspectives. This discussion will also show how Bloch is, if anything, more critical and devastating in his attack on ideologies, like psychoanalysis, than many Marxist critics.

Given Bloch's emphasis on the importance of the subjective dimension in the constitution of human experience and for radical theory and politics, it is necessary that he distinguish his theory of subjectivity from psychoanalytic theories. He does this, first, by rooting psychological tendencies in the body and in human needs, and primarily hunger, rather than in instincts and the unconscious _ la Freud (pp. 45ff.). He also conceptualizes "man as a quite extensive complex of drives" (47ff.) and constantly emphasizes cravings, wishing, desiring, and hoping for a better life

opposed to Freudian emphases on castration, repression, and the conservative political economy of the instincts which are more characterized by repetition, excitation-release, and ultimately entropy (the death instinct) than the development of new drives, impulses, and tendencies and possibilities for change and transformation such as one finds at the center of Bloch's theory (whereas Freud tends to present a fixed view of human nature).

At the end of the first stage of his critique of Freud, Bloch concludes: "In short, we realize that man is an equally changeable and extensive complex of drives, a heap of changing, and mostly badly ordered wishes. And a permanent motivating force, a single basic drive, in so far as it does not become independent and thus hang in the air, is hardly conceivable." Rather there are several basic drives which emerge as primary at different times in social and individual life depending on the conditions prevailing at the time (50).

In a discussion of "Various Interpretations of the Basic Human Drive," Bloch carries out critiques of Freud's notion of the primacy of the sexual drive and Freud's notions of the ego drive and repression, repression and the unconscious, and sublimation (51ff.). The key point is that:

The unconscious of psychoanalysis is therefore, as we can see, never a Not-Yet-Conscious, an element of progressions; it consists rather of regressions. Accordingly, even the process of making this unconscious conscious only clarifies What Has Been; i.e. there is nothing new in the Freudian unconscious. This became even clearer when C.G. Jung, the psychoanalytic fascist reduced the libido and its unconscious contents entirely to the primeval. According to him, exclusively phylogenetic primeval memories or primeval fantasies exist in the unconscious, falsely designated 'archetypes'; and all wishful images also go back into this night, only suggest prehistory. Jung even considers the night to be so colorful that consciousness pales beside it; as a spurner of the light, he devalues consciousness. In contrast, Freud does of course uphold illuminating consciousness, but one which is itself surrounded by the ring of the id, by the fixed unconsciousness of a fixed libido. Even highly productive artistic creations do not lead out of this Fixum; they are simply sublimations of the self-enclosed libido (56).

In his analysis, Bloch positively valorizes Freud's enlightenment rationalism over Jung's irrationalism, and while he carries through a rehabilitation of what is sometimes dismissed as "the irrational," he also carries out a devastating critique of obscurantist, reactionary, irrationalist tendencies, especially those connected with fascism. Indeed, continuing to examine his critique of Jung, and his critique of Freud's disciple Adler who claimed that the will to power was the primary human drive, should help differentiate Bloch's theory of the subjective from more reactionary variants with which he might be wrongly identified. This exercise will also illustrate what a sharp and powerful critique of ideology Bloch carries through, and how he discerns ideological tendencies in phenomena often overlooked, and is able to connect ideological theories to socio-historical tendencies.

Bloch discerns, for example, how Adler's Will to Power is related to competitive capitalist drives to move from the bottom to the top and how his theories of inferiority complex and neurosis reproduce the feelings of those strata of capitalist societies who have failed economically and who thus blame themselves for their failures (57ff.). Bloch concludes:

Because Adler therefore drives sex out of the libido and inserts individual power, his definition of drives takes the ever steeper capitalist path from Schopenhauer to Nietzsche and reflects this path ideologically and psychoanalytically. Freud's concept of libido borders on the 'will to life' in Schopenhauer's philosophy; Schopenhauer in fact described the sexual organs as 'the focal points of the will.' Adler's 'Will to Power' conversely coincides verbally, and partly also in terms of content with Nietzsche's definition of the basic drive from his last period; in this respect, Nietzsche has triumphed over Schopenhauer here, that is to say, the imperialist elbow has triumphed over the gentlemanly pleasure-displeasure body in psychoanalysis. The competitive struggle which hardly leaves any time for sexual worries stressed industriousness rather than randiness; the hectic day of the businessman thus eclipses the hectic night of the rake and his libido (58).

Bloch then points out that the hecticness of life and the structural anxiety that permeates life in capitalist society --which submits the underlying population to the vagaries and uncertainties of the market,-- produce tendencies toward escape and regression, especially among the middle and lower petite-bourgeois strata. Thus Adler's celebration of a Will to Power -- which implicitly summons one to muster one's energies for production and competition -- loses appeal as it becomes increasingly difficult to succeed in the marketplace. "Above all the path to the so-called heights lost some of its interest and prospects, in exact proportion to the decline of free enterprise, as a result of monopoly capitalism" (59).

The class strata who had previously responded to follow the calls by Nietzsche, Adler, and others to scale the heights of competition and worldly success began to look backward toward "the so-called depths, in which the eyes roll instead of aiming at a goal" (59). Consequently, the appeal grew of C.J. Jung, "the fascistically frothing psychoanalyst" who "consequently posited the frenzy-drive in place of the power drive" (59). I cite the following passage in its entirety to provide a sense of Bloch's power as a critic of ideology:

Just as sexuality is only part of this Dionysian general libido, so also is the will to power, in fact the latter is completely transformed into battle-frenzy, into a stupor which in no way strives toward individual goals. In Jung, libido thus becomes an archaically undivided primeval unity of all drives, or 'Eros' per se: consequently it extends from eating to the Last Supper, from coitus to unio mystica, from the frothing mouth of the shaman, even the berserker, to the rapture of Fra Angelico. Even here, therefore, Nietzsche triumphs over Schopenhauer, but he triumphs as the affirmation of a mescaline Dionysus over the negation of the will to life. As a result, the unconscious aspect of this mystified libido is also not contested and there is no attempt to resolve it into current consciousness as in Freud. Rather the neurosis, particularly that of modern, all too civilized and conscious man, derives

according to Jung precisely from the fact that men have emerged too far out of what is unconsciously growing, outside the world of 'elemental feel-thinking.' Here Jung borders not only on the fascist version of Dionysus, but also partly on the vitalistic philosophy of Bergson (59-60).

Those who might be inclined to dismiss Bloch as an irrationalist should read his critique of German irrationalist thought and fascist ideologies. After critiquing Adler and Jung, Bloch goes after Bergson, the "sentimental penis-poet" D. H. Lawrence, the "complete Tarzan philosopher" Ludwig Klages, the celebrator of Neanderthal man Gottfried Benn, and the petit bourgeois mystifier Martin Heidegger (60ff.).[10] While Bergson's vitalism contained some progressive moments, by contrast D.H. Lawrence, "and Jung along with him, sings the wildernesses of the elemental age of love, which to his misfortune man has emerged from; he seeks the nocturnal moon in the flesh, the unconscious sun in the blood. And Klages blows in a more abstract way on the same bull-horn; he does not only hark back like the early Romantics to the Middle Ages, but to the diluvium, to precisely where Jung's impersonal, pandemonic libido lives" (59-60).

Bloch continues his provocative critique of German irrationalism (pp. 61ff.), that rivals his friend Lukacs' critiques,[11] and then presents his own theory of subjectivity, hope, the preconscious, the Not-Yet-Conscious, and so on (pp. 65ff.). This anthropological analysis of the elements in subjective experience which strive for a better life far surpasses the theory of the subjective dimension of Lukacs, or any almost any other Marxist. Indeed, *The Principle of Hope* provides a treasure house of insights into many topics neglected in standard Marxism, as well as providing an extremely useful concept of culture and ideology critique. In the next section, I thus want to examine some of the richest section of *The Principle of Hope*, which I believe are most productive for cultural criticism today.

Bloch's Cultural Criticism and the Panorama of Culture

I have stressed how Bloch's theory of cultural criticism is rooted in his anthropological and philosophical perspectives, which are delineated in the first two parts of *The Principle of Hope*. [12] Part three contains explorations of "Wishful Images in the Mirror," in which Bloch decodes traces of hope permeating everyday life and culture. No philosopher since Hegel has explored in such detail and with such penetration the cultural tradition, which for Bloch contains untapped emancipatory potential. Yet Bloch concentrates not only on the great works of the cultural heritage, but on familiar and ordinary aspects of everyday experience, within which Bloch finds utopian potential.

Fashion, grooming, new clothes, and how we make ourselves appear to others exhibit the utopian potential of transforming us into something better. Perceiving the utopian potential of advertising, Bloch recognizes that it invests magical properties into commodities, which will produce allegedly magical results for the customer. "Shop-windows and advertising are in their capitalist form exclusively lime-twigs for the attracted dream birds" (344). To be sure, the promises of advertising and consumer culture are often false promises and often produce false

needs, but their power and ubiquity shows the depth of the needs that capitalism exploits and the wishes for another life that permeate capitalist societies.

Moreover, many people wear masks, often derived from magazines or mass cultural images, to transform themselves, to attempt to invent a more satisfying life. Thus, do youths join subcultures, even fascist ones like the Ku Klux Klan. Criminals and crime provide powerful attractions to oppressed youth, promising transcendence of their everyday misery.[13] Similar motivations lead individuals to join the Klan and other racist groups, to try to get a new and more satisfying identity through immersion in violent subcultures. Magazines, best-selling novels, and film and television also offer advice and models for self-transformation and how to achieve romance, success, and wealth.

Fairy tales celebrate the courage and cunning whereby ordinary individuals achieve their dreams. The realization of wishes is the very substance of fairy tales and images of artifacts like Aladdin's lamp provide powerful fantasies of wish-fulfillment. Travel to exotic far-away places enables individuals to dream of better lives, while the circus provides access to a "wishful world of eccentricity and precise dexterity" (364). Adventure stories are vehicles of escape to a world of excitement and often show ordinary individuals defeating evil villains and oppressors. These are "immature, but honest substitute{s} for revolution" (368) and expressions of deep-seated desires for more power and satisfaction in their daily lives among ordinary people.

These forms of popular culture thus demonstrate desire for change and transformation and contain utopian energies which can make individuals yearn for a better world and attempt to transform themselves and their world. This culture is not, however, completely innocent or positive in its effects. Travel stories and images are exploited by travel agencies, promoting colonialism and the decline of everything, "with the exception of the West" (376). Much culture simply expresses and furthers the decadence of capitalist societies. In an attack on American popular music and dance that out-does Adorno, Bloch writes:

Where everything is disintegrating though, the body also contorts itself effortlessly along with it. Nothing coarser, nastier, more stupid has ever been seen than the jazz-dances since 1930. Jitterbug, Boogie-Woogie, this is imbecility gone wild, with a corresponding howling which provides the so to speak music accompaniment. American movement of this kind is rocking the Western countries, not as dance, but as vomiting. Man is to be soiled and his brain emptied; he has even less idea amongst his exploiters where he stands, for whom he is grafting, what he is being sent off to die for (394).

Against this "American filth," however Bloch claims that "a kind of movement of purification emerged" in the "new schools of dance developing from Isidora Duncan" which attempted "to demonstrate a more beautiful human image in the flesh" (394). Bloch also celebrates the Russian folk-dance which expresses a "joy beyond the day of drudgery. The calmness and boisterousness both say: Here I am human, here I am entitled to be" (395). Expressionist dance, however, is more ambivalent, rebelling against "the spirit of gravity," but also flowing into "the local

bloodlake of fascism; for which this kind of roaring of wings was already foreseeable in its imperialist premises" (398).

These examples show that Bloch carries out a differentiated critique of cultural forms, tending to attack those which he sees involved with fascist culture, or a decadent capitalism, and praising those which rebel against capitalist or celebrate a healthy socialism. He contrasts, for example, the "incomparable falsification" of Hollywood film, contrasted with the "realistic film in its anti-capitalist, no longer capitalist peak performances" (408). While Bloch is sharply critical of Hollywood film (see especially p. 410), he believes that film per se contains much utopian potential in its ability to project images of a better life, to explore and redeem concrete reality, and to transmit utopian dreams and energies.

In sum, Bloch finds utopian traces throughout the field of culture, demonstrating that: "Mankind and the world carry enough good future; no plan is itself good without this fundamental belief within it" (447). While it is beneficial to affirm Bloch's methodological imperative of searching for utopian and emancipatory potential within all forms of culture, while also attending to embellishing and mystifying ideological elements, one might quarrel with his specific evaluations and judgements. As my presentation makes clear, he tends to attack culture that affirms capitalism, fascism, and philosophical idealism, and to praise culture which promotes socialism.

The limitations of his evaluations, I believe, derive from his overly dogmatic Marxism and his exile experiences which provide consistently negative depictions of the United States.[14] *The Principle of Hope* was written while Bloch was a relatively emphatic Marxist and his political hermeneutic deeply influenced his readings. His discussion of theater, for instance, celebrates Brecht (413ff) and progressive German and Soviet theater, and exalts theater which promotes "defiance and hope" rather than the cantharis of pity and fear of Greek theater (429ff.). He also constantly attacks the enemies of utopia, such as the French artist Grandville and Aristophanes (434; 435ff.) and above all attacks American culture.

Utilizing Bloch for cultural criticism thus requires distancing oneself from some of his specific judgements and analyses while making use of his double-coded concept of ideology and his method of cultural criticism. Cultural studies for Bloch rejects distinctions between high and low culture, seeing utopian potential in cultural artifacts ranging from advertising and display to Beethoven and opera. Bloch's politicization of cultural critique forces one to make political evaluations of cultural artifacts, though one may make different judgements, and utilize different political perspectives, than Bloch. Indeed, cultural studies for Bloch was intimately bound up with his social and political theory, so that cultural criticism for him was an important part of political practice.[15]

Socialism, Revolution, and the Red Arrow

Part Four of *The Principle of Hope* interrogates the "Outlines of a Better World" in a variety of

utopias. Bloch finds utopian dreams not only in the social and political utopias of the great utopian theorists, but also in a variety of technological, architectural, and geographical utopias, as well as in painting, opera, literature, and other forms of art. Part Five describes "Wishful Images of the Fulfilled Moment," in which morality, music, religion, and philosophies project images and visions of supreme fulfillment, culminating in the figure of an individual who "has grasped himself and established what is his, without exploitation and alienation." In this situation, "in real democracy, there arises in the world something which shines into the childhood of all and in which no one has yet been: homeland" (1,376).

Culture for Bloch contains traces of what he calls red arrows which migrate through history looking for realization in socialism. Bloch finds a red path weaving through history, revolting against alienation, exploitation, and oppression, struggling for a better world. The social and political utopias present imperfect yearnings for what was more fully developed in Marxism and socialism. Thus Bloch develops an explicitly political hermeneutic that interprets certain cultural artifacts and residues from the past as pointing toward socialism.

Certain aspects of the bourgeois revolutions, for instance, were never realized and contain a surplus of critical and emancipatory potential that can be used to criticize bourgeois society on the grounds that it was not realizing its own potentials. One of Bloch's more productive ideas is that the ideological surplus or cultural surplus is not just an expression of the socio-economic base or the dominant mode of production but is *Ungleichzeitig*, describing what is non-contemporaneous or nonsynchronic with the present.[16] This concept points to the fact that residues and traditions from the past continue to be effective in the present, even though it might appear that they are completely archaic and historically surpassed (i.e. fascist primitivism, or the strange phenomenon of Reaganism in a technological United States).

But *Ungleichzeitigkeit* also points to elements from the past which anticipate future developments, which appear before their time, which point ahead to the future (i.e. earlier anticipations of socialism) and which have yet to be realized. However, the utopian surplus contains the potential to project long-term goals for an individual or society and for political practice that provides alternatives to the status quo which is far-seeing and future oriented. For Bloch, ideology and utopia are therefore not simply opposites because utopian elements appear in ideology and utopias are often permeated with ideological content and mystification. Cultural surplus for Bloch has the potentiality of utopian surplus which anticipates, previews, and points to a better organization of society and everyday life, and it is the task of the cultural critic to discern and unfold this progressive potential and to relate it to the struggles and possibilities of the present. Bloch's cultural hermeneutic is thus deeply political and cultural studies for him is thus intimately bound up with political practice.

Notes

0 For my reflections on Bloch's Marxism, see my articles (with Harry O'Hara) "Utopia and Marxism in Ernst Bloch," *New German Critique* 9 (Fall 1976), pp. 11-34 and "Introduction to Ernst Bloch, 'The Dialectical Method,'" *Man and World* 16 (1983), 281-284.

1 Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, three volumes (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1986). This study will mainly focus on the use for cultural criticism and ideology critique of Bloch's magnum opus, though I also draw on some of his other writings and my previous research into Bloch's thought.

2 There are, of course, a library of books on Marx's concept of ideology and heated debates over which aspects to emphasize and its relative merits and limitations. For my position within these debates, which I will not rehearse here, see Douglas Kellner, "Ideology, Marxism, and Advanced Capitalism," *Socialist Review* 42 (Nov-Dec 1978), pp. 37-65.

3 Bloch's starting point is always the everyday life and existential situation of the individual, thus his approach is similar to Henri Lefebvre and the French situationists who also undertook a critique of everyday life and were concerned with the existence of concrete individuals.

4 See Wayne Hudson, "Ernst Bloch: 'Ideology' and Postmodern Social Philosophy," *Canadian Journal of Political and Social Theory*, Vol. 7, Nos. 1-2 (Winter 1983), p. 136. I draw on Hudson's presentation of Bloch's concept of ideology here, but do not accept his critiques of Bloch, nor his curious sketch of a "postmodern social philosophy," which anticipates in an eccentric fashion, the current craze for postmodern theories. He presents Bloch as a prototype of modern theory.

5 Bloch's *Natural Law and Human Dignity* expands on this notion (Cambridge, Mass.: The MIT Press, 1986).

6 Fredric Jameson, "Reification and Utopia in Mass Culture," *Social Text* 1 (Winter 1979): 130-148.

7 Jameson, "Ideology and Utopia," p. 144.

8 See Wilhelm Reich, *Sex-Pol* (New York: Vintage, 1972) and on French Freudo-Marxism, see Mark Poster, *Existential Marxism in Postwar France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

9 See Ernst Bloch, *Heritage of Our Times* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990).

10 Bloch was an early and consistent critic of Heidegger, perceiving the link between his philosophy and fascism which later historiographic and ideological critiques discovered.

11 Compare, for example, Georg Lukacs, *The Destruction of Reason* (London: Merlin, 1980).

12 For further discussion of Bloch's philosophy, see Wayne Hudson, *The Marxist Philosophy of Ernst Bloch* (New York: Saint Martin's, 1982).

13 This is a motif of many films dealing with the dilemmas of black youth, including *Straight Out of Brooklyn*, *New Jack City*, *Boys N' the Hoods*, *Juice*, and the earlier cycle of blaxploitation films that celebrated drug dealers and gangs. The other utopia offered for young black audiences is that of success in the music industry, as evidenced in the films of Prince and the ubiquitous rock videos of Michael Jackson, various rap groups, and others.

14 An exile from fascist Germany, Bloch lived in the U.S. from 1938-1949. Yet he learned little English and mainly immersed himself in the writing of his major works and in German exile politics, while he was supported by his wife who worked as an architect (interviews with the Blochs during the summer of 1974). Like the Frankfurt school exiles, he thus had a predominantly negative view of American culture.

15 For my own concept of a multi-perspectival cultural studies, see my articles "Film, Politics, and Ideology: Reflections on Hollywood Film in the Age of Reagan," *The Velvet Light Trap*, No. 27 (Spring 1991), pp. 9-24 and "Toward A Multiperspectival Cultural Studies," *Centennial Review XX*

16 See Ernst Bloch, "Nonsynchronism and Dialectics," *New German Critique 11* (Spring 1977), pp. 22-38. The text is now also translated in *Heritage of Our Times*, op. cit.

“ Ernst Bloch, *Spirit of Utopia*, 1918 The relationship between art and society has always been a central question for artists, thinkers and activists on the Left. In the twenties. With Fredric Jameson’s critique of postmodern pastiche in mind, one might argue that Bloch overestimated the critical potential of techniques such as montage. Rather than reactivating the radical emancipatory spirit of modernist aesthetics, as Bloch might have predicted, Jameson argues that postmodern works merely integrate superficial stylistic references to modernism and other movements into a critically ineffectual “simulacrum,” which amounts to nothing more than the “cannabilization of all styles of the past, the random stylistic play of allusion” (Jameson, 1991: 17). Ernst Bloch’s influential ideas include his theory of utopian consciousness, his resolute inclination to merge aesthetics and politics, rehabilitation of hope, and atheistic conception of Christianity. Although Bloch’s major early texts, *Spirit of Utopia* and *Traces*, have recently been translated into English, and there has been renewed interest in Bloch over the last 15 years, he is still relatively unknown compared to other left German-Jewish intellectuals. The coronavirus pandemic is transforming modern society, reviving old social practices and formulas such as the Russian “flat-car-dacha” principle, while opening new technological frontiers and creating new cultural skills. Professor Vitaly Kurennoy, Head of HSE’s School of Cultural Studies, discusses these issues in an op-ed for *Izvestia*. Ernst Bloch, Utopia, and Ideology Critique Douglas Kellner. Chapter 8. *Secularism and Post-Secularism in Roberto Unger and Ernst Bloch: Toward a Utopian Ontology*; Ruth Levitas. Chapter 9. *At the End of Utopia* “Indifference Josep Ramoneda. An immanent critique of ideology will, therefore, benefit from a thematization of the irrepressible utopian aspirations that always percolate into its object. Ruth Levitas uncovers another facet of Blochian thought in her chapter, “Secularism and PostSecularism in Roberto Unger and Ernst Bloch: Towards a Utopian Ontology.” She argues that the model of secular humanism involves a debased humanism, or what Bloch referred to as “stupid materialism.”