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**Hope Against Hope:
Ambivalences, Resistances and Persistence**

A Thesis Presented

by

Daniel Stirling Richmond

to

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Abstract of the Thesis

**Hope Against Hope:
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To hope against hope is to believe in the possibility of something against that which experience says is more probable. Where these two ideas meet, possibility and probability, is as good a place as any to start. In comparing Bloch and Adorno, it is my intention to glean from the oft over harvested fields of their work the nature of hope their works represent. Bloch is of course the more obvious candidate for such a study. His *Principle of Hope* seems an easy read in light of the task of discerning his own notion of hope. Interestingly enough though, most only write about Bloch's affinity for hope, few have addressed how this hope manifests itself in his work, or is even extended in to the world. Most only consider Bloch's principle of hope and not the essence that informs it. Adorno, the darker, dourer of the two, his hope is often overlooked for the more dire and critical elements in his writing. Preferring the more tempestuous Teddy, most pass over the relationship that hope can have to criticism and how his conception of hope informs his work. In both situations, the spirit of hope is often lost behind and within the nature of their work.

In my thesis, I mean to first bring out the specific qualities within Bloch and Adorno's works that correlate to what I would consider to be their individual appreciations of hope. Then, by placing "hope against hope," I mean to ultimately collocate these qualities of hope next to one another, so as to bring out distinguishing elements within their work and most importantly within their own ideas of hope. To do this, I wish to present four models wherein I will distinguish each philosopher's individual work. These models can possibly be thought of as catalytic mediums where each philosopher's reaction to the medium can be individually registered and, ultimately gauged by comparison to the other philosopher's reaction.

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Such a comparison is meant as nothing more than an attempt to clarify and distinguish each philosopher's reaction, as understood as evidence to the nature of his work. In other words, the comparison is meant only as a means to throw each philosopher's thoughts into relief against the thoughts of the other, and therein accentuate each of their individual positions. In this sense, it is not my intention to pit one against the other as if in a competition. This would require a situation for the competition to unfold so as to declare a "winner" and a "loser." For example, who had the stronger arm when arm wrestling over Jazz criticism. This is not my intention. By placing them next to one another so as to distinguish their individual perspectives and accentuate their comparative differences, it is my ultimate intention to emphasize what I

understand the nature of their individual appraisals of hope to be, and how this is possibly evident in their work.

Initially, I feel it is necessary to clarify three things with regard to the structure of the thesis. First, with regard to the four models that I am working with, the choice of these particular models is not to be understood as the only means possible for drawing out differences between Bloch and Adorno's works. Their works are dense with thought and rich with meaning. If anything, this thesis has shown me that four models barely scratch the surface of any comparison between these twin titans of 20th Century German aesthetics. I have chosen these models, though, because I feel that they not only best accentuate their individual approaches, and because they best establish areas where their individual works can be distinguished from each other, but also because I feel they accentuate best the nature of each philosopher's hope.

Second, I wish also to briefly explain the reason for the broader structure itself. As a brief clarification as to the nature of the models, in a broad sense they deal with a subject-object relation to art and culture. The first two models are directed more so at art. The first of these deals what I perceive the philosopher's philosophical point of origin to be, where they come from. Ultimately, this is intended to illuminate their individual approaches to hope. The second model is the destination, so to speak, and it deals with their aesthetic theories.

The third and fourth models deal with culture, or art on a larger, societal scale. The third models deals particularly with the philosopher's critique of culture. This is significant for showing how they approach culture as a medium for aesthetic experience. The fourth model deals with cultural material itself, and how I understand each philosopher's approach to the very idea of culture itself, namely, culture's relationship to the individual.

I have split the thesis into two parts, individually covering the four models for each philosopher. I feel that this is not only in keeping with the nature of the title — *of placing Bloch's hope against Adorno's* — but it also grants the most respect to each philosopher and their work by not punctuating their thoughts with the thoughts of the other. I will save the act of comparison for the conclusion.

Finally, I wish to clarify the nature of the structure, in particular the direction that is implicit in the thesis' structure. To explain, the thesis is split into two sections between Adorno and Bloch, and I deal with the four models and in each section. The overall nature to the structure of the thesis, though, is reflective. Where I start with Adorno by addressing the first model, which deals with what I consider to be the nature of his approach to aesthetics, cultural material and culture's effects, for Bloch, this is the model that I will end with. The second model, which deals with the aesthetic theory of each

philosopher, is also presented in a mirrored fashion. The same goes for the third and the fourth.

For the sake of clarity, I have structured the thesis as an attempt to reflect my thoughts on the relationship between the two philosophers. It is my overall view that on the spectrum of thought and action, Bloch and Adorno fall to opposite sides. Adorno falls to the side of theory that is contemplation, and Bloch falls to the side of praxis that is experimentation. This is somewhat complicated because both thinkers are dialectical in their approach, so a dichotomous handling can be tricky. Without going into too much detail at this time, I believe Adorno gives more weight to the theoretical side of the theory-praxis dichotomy; Bloch gives more weight to the active, practical part. Both incorporate the other aspect of the dichotomy, but the second aspects position is usually subordinate to their first choice. The structure of the thesis is a movement along this spectrum.

That said, in the thesis I start with Adorno and the first model is related to his approach to the theory-praxis dichotomy, namely what I believe is his emphasis upon contemplation. The second model, as stated before is on his approach to aesthetic theory, and it builds off of the first model. The third model deals with the nature of cultural criticism, and the last model is how each philosopher appreciates culture, i.e. what they understand culture to mean. The difference between the two sections, covering Adorno and Bloch, is

that for Adorno, I begin with the model related to the theory-praxis dichotomy; for Bloch this is the last model I cover. The last model covered for Adorno, their individual appreciation of culture, is the first model covered for Bloch. This structure is formulated around a simple image: the Janus Head, but rather than the conventional understanding of the Janus head where their faces are pointing in two different directions, I propose that one can understand Bloch and Adorno as a Janus head where the faces are turned to one another. In between them, in what is usually considered the threshold of a passageway, is the present moment, or what might be considered as evidence of the present moment in the form of culture.

Bloch's gaze is directed through the material of culture and towards the horizon of the future. Adorno's is through the cultural material but is directed more at the past. This is not to say that Adorno is fixated on the past, only that any consideration that he has about the future is ultimately conditioned by past and present experience. The structure of the thesis, then, is an attempt to capture this image of the Janus head turned to face itself, what Bloch presents in his "A Grotesque Conversation Between the Two Janus Heads."¹ With that clarified, we now find ourselves back where we started: possibility and probability.

¹ Ernst Bloch, *Politische Messungen, Pestzeit, Vormärz*, "Groteske Unterhaltung der beiden Janusköpfe untereinander". P. 429 Abbr. PMPV

CONTEMPLATION

The term contemplation comes to us from the Latin word *contemplari* and is formed of the stems *con-* and *templum*. The original use of the word meant “to seek auguries,” or to search for meanings in omens or signs, which possibly explains the presence of *templum*, or temple. There is a reflective element, then, that mirrors the dialectic internal to the idea of contemplation. To seek higher meaning in material signs reflects the seeking of a concept through which an experience gains significance when brought into a union with the idea. One might say, then, that as long as both the augury and the meaning or the experience and its significance, are held simultaneously in tension — *in mind and experience, transcendent and immanent* — that the act of contemplation expresses its dialectical tones.

Contemplation’s relation to material experience distinguishes it from other forms of thought. Even though contemplation holds resonance with the terms meditation and speculation, contemplation nevertheless seeks to maintain a direct relation to the object of experience, which the terms meditation and speculation seem to lack. Meditation, like contemplation, is the consideration of a thought or event. Contrary to contemplation, though,

meditation usually conveys a sense of isolation and distance between the thinking subject and the objective of experience.

Similarly, speculation holds elements of consideration or deliberation that are resonant with contemplation. However, speculation is usually understood as done in the absence of evidence or experience. Whereas meditation is the renunciation of experience for the sake of a sensorial silence, speculation is deliberation devoid of the empirical, where experience of such is not [yet] possible. Therefore, because of their abstinence or absence of a necessary experiential element, both speculation and meditation lack a dialectical element that is related to the empirical or immanent nature of experience.

Due to contemplation's dialectical handling of both the experiential and conceptual elements, I wish to use the term as a point of entry in to Adorno's own dialectical method and theories related to aesthetics and culture. This is not meant as an attempt to replace Adorno's use of his own terminology, dialectic or negative dialectic, etc. It is meant solely as a kind of heuristic crib-sheet, a means of ultimately directing the reader's thoughts to the larger issue found in another important debate, namely concerning the unity of theory and practice, which I consider to be implicit in the use of this term, especially with regard to Adorno.

To explain, contemplation is more than purely theoretical, for Adorno it is an act of thinking. In Martin Seel's text, *Adornos Philosophie der Kontemplation*, he puts it most succinctly. "The praxis of contemplation is for

Adorno a comportment [*Verhalten*], in which aesthetic perception, theoretical cognition [*Erkennen*] and practical recognition [*Anerkennung*] are dealt with equally.”² Adorno argues that thought itself is an act, and that contemplation is the act of thinking dialectically when no other opportunity for practice is possible³. Contemplation has the potential to remain dialectically engaged in material experience and not become self-satisfied, such as the ideas of meditation and speculation, which often sacrifice the empirical for the sake of the conceptual. Furthermore, for Adorno, because of this relation to the empirical moment, contemplation can also maintain a critical element.

Before moving further, it is important to point out that Adorno does often use the term speculation, though. In *Negative Dialectics*, he discusses the “speculative moment” in the introduction. Wherein, he writes about the triumphal accomplishment of the speculative moment as it survives the crashing of consciousness through the erected façades of the status quo: “what will not have its law prescribed for it by given facts transcends them even in the closest contact with the objects, and in repudiating a sacrosanct transcendence.”⁴ What is important, though, is the comparison of this consideration of speculation with Adorno’s later use of contemplation in *Negative Dialectics*, with particular regard to the same idea of façades, in the

² Martin Seel, *Adornos Philosophie der Kontemplation*, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2004) p. 13 Author’s translation.

³ Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, (New York: Continuum, 2004), p. 244-245. Abbr. ND

⁴ ND 17

section appropriately titled *Contemplation*. This latter section sharpens his earlier considerations of speculation against the whetstone of praxis and theorie, and finally presents contemplation as the means to illicit change in the world, over and against speculation, so long as it “does not content itself this side of praxis.”⁵

Adorno also uses the term in his essay *Cultural Criticism and Society*. This text will be further discussed later in this thesis, in the section dealing with Adorno’s critique of cultural criticism. For the moment though, it is important to point out that Adorno considers contemplation as more than able to critically handle culture, in comparison to immanent or transcendent forms of critique. This is possible due to contemplation’s more dialectical approach to experience through its incorporation of both the immanent and transcendent forms of criticism.

In this sense, because contemplation holds both the possibility for a dialectic that does not dismiss either the experience or the concept, because it expresses a unity of theory and practice, and because it similarly holds the potential for cultural critique, I do not feel that it would be in anyway shoe-horning Adorno’s own theories into tight-fitting terminology by simply placing contemplation on the table for consideration as a viable and valuable tool for understanding his works. For the sake of this paper then, the term contemplation will signify Adorno’s material dialectical act of thought that

⁵ ND 245

holds a potential for critique, where specific emphasis is given to the unity of theory and practice implied in the term.

It is not my goal, however, to do the injustice of pigeonholing Adorno as a proponent for either theory or practice over and against the other. I recognize that he is a dialectical thinker, and as such, he seeks to unite polarities and contradictions that create disparities. However, there is a tangible weight to his writings, and I would argue that it is somewhat displaced to one side of the theory-practice dichotomy.

To clarify, if I were to position contemplation and action on a theory-practice spectrum, I suspect that Adorno would land to the side of theory through his emphasis upon the mental labor of a contemplative act, over and against the physical labor of a revolutionary act of change. Though contemplation still encompasses both practice and theory by Adorno's placing theory as an inner-term of practice, nevertheless, he notably favors thought, or theory before and central to all actions. For example, with regard to such philosophical issues as identity thinking, which he sees as a central issue to many of humanities problems, Adorno asserts that thought thinking against thought⁶ is the only means to bring about change. For Adorno, radical action is therefore questionable at best. For Adorno, praxis is *prius* only within the

⁶ ND 365

prima of theory; in other words, practice is only *prior* to theory within the *primacy* of contemplation as an act of thought.

On a final note, if one were simply to venture a thought of what Adorno's utopian image might look like — innocently disregarding his own comments about the “graven image” [*Bildverbot*]⁷ regarding the content of utopian imagery — one would need to take into account his defense of the nonidentical. Often Adorno himself offers glimpses at different utopian approaches, these glimpses usually relate to the overcoming of identity thinking. In *Negative Dialectics*, he contrasts the cognitive utopia which “would be to use concepts to unseal the nonconceptual with concepts,” against the concrete utopia which would be free from system or contradiction.⁸ Note the use of the term *cognitive* when he describes the utopian image of concepts unsealing the nonconceptual, which implies an ironic twist with regard to utopia: a cognitive, noetic utopia is no utopia because it lacks the erotic elements found in concrete experience.

The concrete utopian image would thus be one where neither system nor contradiction exists, where the ordering of things by identity thinking and the inlying contradictions of identities would not exist. This could be understood as a world where thought has freed itself from its constrictions of absolutist identity thinking and the attempted subordination of material nature.

⁷ Ernst Bloch. *Tendenz-Latenz-Utopie* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1978) p.361. Abbr. TLU

⁸ ND 10-11

In an Adornian utopia, judgments are reflective, non-deterministic; and contemplation is the basis of all practice. For Adorno, the foundation for all practical philosophy is formulated around a social physiognomy. Adorno's utopia is the preservation of the nonidentical and the inherent value of the object of experience through the use of philosophical contemplation.

Adorno's essential argument throughout his collected works is against identity thinking which seeks to subordinate the material object, or particular, under the larger, abstraction concepts. "Exchange value," for example, is a larger concept used in capitalist ideology, is the reification and subsumption of individual material objects under the title of commodity. Furthermore, this subordination is presented under the auspice of capital equalization. For Adorno, capitalist ideology is not the foundation for identity thinking, the exact opposite is the case. His argument is that capitalist ideology would not exist without the preexisting disposition within thought itself for the exchange value implicit in identity thinking. Therefore, one might say that thought's reliance upon deterministic identity thinking is the foundation for the dominance of identity equivalence found in capitalist exchange value.

Even worse, Adorno sees this form of identity thinking as a network of ever tightening weave due to the administration of culture. "The network of the whole is drawn ever tighter, modeled after the act of exchange."⁹ Adorno's hope of overcoming the stranglehold of identity thinking — the totality of

⁹ Theodor W. Adorno. *Prisms*, "Culture Critique and Society" trans. Samuel M. Weber. (Cambridge, The MIT Press, 1967), p. 21. Abbr. CCS

delusion — is his understanding of contemplation. Contemplation, in the form of philosophy, must think against thought, so as to think itself beyond its own concepts. “The concept—organon of thinking, and yet the wall between thinking and the thought—negates that yearning. Philosophy can neither circumvent such negation nor submit to it. It must strive, by way of the concept, to transcend the concept.”¹⁰ Adorno then proffers hope for this task in the form of negative dialectics due to its lack of resigning itself to its own contemplations “as if it were whole.”¹¹ In other words, non-self-satisfied contemplation, as demanded by negative dialectics, is capable of thinking against itself. “If negative dialectics demands the self-reflection of thinking, then this implies in tangible terms, that thinking must, nowadays at any rate, in order to be true, also think against itself.”¹²

Finally, for Adorno, “philosophy has the curious characteristic that, although itself entrapped, locked inside the glasshouse of our constitution and our language, it is nevertheless able constantly to think beyond itself and its limits, to think itself through the walls of its glasshouse.”¹³ Until thought can move through and beyond its own identity thinking, Adorno’s emphasis upon the importance of nonidentity in the identity-nonidentity relationship is best championed through his notion of the aesthetic experience of the work of art.

¹⁰ ND 15

¹¹ Theodor W. Adorno. *Philosophie und Gesellschaft*, “Meditationen zur Metaphysik” (Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam jun.) p.170. Author’s translation.

¹² ND 365

¹³ Theodor W. Adorno. *Metaphysics: Concepts and Problems* trans. Edmund Jephcott, (Cambridge: Polity, 2000). P. 68.

RESISTANCE AESTHETICS

Aesthetic experience becomes living experience only by way of its object, in that instant in which artworks themselves become animate under its gaze.... Through contemplative immersion the immanent processual quality of the work is set free.... This immanent dynamic is, in a sense, a higher-order element of what artworks are.¹⁴

Given Adorno's emphasis upon the importance of nonidentity in the identity-nonidentity relation, art could be considered as an expression of the experience of nonidentity par excellence for Adorno. It is therefore important to address Adorno's aesthetic theory so as to understand his complex construction of the art object, and likewise its relation to the subjective experience of art. This is significant in three ways. On the one hand, a presentation of Adorno's conception of aesthetic experience can illustrate his emphasis on the importance of nonidentity and its embodiment in the work of art. On the other hand, it also lays necessary groundwork for the sections that follow regarding cultural criticism and *Bildung*. Lastly and most importantly, it enhances an understanding of the role that contemplation and aesthetic experience play within the possibility of an implicit utopian image in Adorno's work.

¹⁴ Theodor W. Adorno. *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. & ed. Robert Hullot-Kentor, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997) 175-176. Abbr. AT

Ultimately, the nonidentity of artworks is a crucial point for showing that contemplation is an expression of hope within Adorno's writing due to its ability to cope with the resistant nature of artworks within subjective aesthetic experience. This subjective encounter of nonidentity within the artwork and, by extension, contemplation's relationship to the artwork, the larger social environment of culture, and culture's administered relation to the individual in turn offers illustrative insights into liberating moments which can, in turn, lead to a larger understanding of an Adornian Utopia and contemplation's role therein. Nevertheless, before we put the rainbow before the storm, we need to first address certain elements in his *Aesthetic Theory* in order to understand better the possibility for a resistant element within his aesthetic theory.

Adorno's *Aesthetic Theory* is gathered posthumously from an unfinished and unfastened draft. In this text his discussion on aesthetics, often running in varied veins of thought and containing contrasted aesthetic theories of other philosophers, is strongly dialectical, using the juxtaposition of historic aesthetic theories to establish and inform his own relations and distinct philosophical ideas. In the broader sense, this affects the nature of his individual approach to aesthetic theories.

At one level, Adorno's own aesthetic theory attempts to walk the line between the hermeneutic theories of art that speak of the import of meaning,

and the empirical theories that search for the significance of art's social function. On one hand, the hermeneutic approach recognizes both the externally constructed social factors as well as the internal or individual elements of the artwork itself that determine the import of meaning and significance to an artwork. On the other hand, the empirical approach has little regard for internal elements of an art work citing more the meaning and significance of an artwork in social relations and contexts. His attempt to work with both of these elements bears resemblance to his own dialectical consideration that critical contemplation can and should be similarly transcendent and immanent with regard to cultural criticism, i.e. conscious of both immanent social elements that inform culture and the transcendent values of culture that can form it.

Dealing with Adorno's aesthetic theory by itself, of key interest for this discussion are his theories of the objective nature of aesthetic experience, and by extension, the larger subjective meaning and significance of art as an object encountered. As a general overview, I believe Adorno's aesthetic experience has resonance with the previous discussion of contemplation. In a similar manner to the failure of identity thinking to wholly grasp the object due to the concept's impotence in subsuming the constant nonidentical nature of the particular, for Adorno, any attempt by the subject of an aesthetic experience to understand or search for meaning in an artwork also fails in light

of the material excess of the art object. This failure in aesthetic experience seems to mirror the failings of conceptual experience to fully subsume the object under its concept.

The difference though, is that within Adorno's understanding of aesthetic experience we gain pleasure from the acknowledgement of the finitude of subjectivity, and release from our own constructed subjectivity.¹⁵ In Adorno's aesthetic experience, we are more notably presented with an abundance of materiality than within normal conceptual experience. This abundance becomes more noticeable as a kind of enigmatic quality to the artwork because it enshrouds the presence of perceived, subjectively constructed meaning within the material. Artworks are considered "enigmatic in that they are the physiognomy of an objective spirit that is never transparent to itself in the moment in which it appears."¹⁶

This is not to say that the artwork's composition *contains* constructed meaning, which would take a more formalist stance to the nature of art's composition, but rather that meaning is in the form of an internal truth: "artworks are enigmatic not in terms of their composition, but of their truth

¹⁵ AT 269

¹⁶ AT 128

content.”¹⁷ I will address truth content of a work of art later. First, I wish to clarify the enigmatic quality of art a little more.

Though an artwork’s aim “is the determination of the indeterminate,” artworks nevertheless share this aim with the enigmatic.¹⁸ Along these lines, “art becomes an enigma” because it appears have been successful in its determinations, “to have solved what is enigmatical in existence”¹⁹ In this sense, enigmaticalness is puzzling, but unlike a puzzle, the enigmaticalness of art lacks a solution. A solution would imply a mystery, and art’s enigmaticalness only offers a vexation to the desire to solve art’s meaning²⁰.

This enigmaticalness of the artwork presents itself anew. Resisting deterministic thought, artworks’ enigmaticalness “outlives the interpretation that arrives at the answer.”²¹ However, those artworks, which simply and completely unfold to contemplation and thought without any enigmatic remainder, are not artworks. In this sense, “completely” is meant conditionally, in that it signifies that the nature of artworks is the constant remainder of the ever-present reflective question. The unfolding of artworks, then, is not the halting of contemplation but the reinstating of reflective

¹⁷ AT 127

¹⁸ AT 124

¹⁹ AT 126

²⁰ AT 121

²¹ AT 125

contemplation through repeated questioning because of the unrecognizable answer.²² This remainder, which can also be thought of as artwork's enigmatical excess, continuously "reveals itself as a question and demands reflection...for the second time with the question 'What is it?'"²³

Aesthetic experience's enigma and abundance are far more complex than our attempt to search for any inner meaning or disentangle it with concepts in the process of identity thinking: in other words, to "use concepts to unseal the nonconceptual with concepts."²⁴ This markedly presents us with an image of our own impotence in locating the significance within the artwork. This failure, and ultimately the negation of our own subjectivity, could therefore be thought of as the significance of art: an obvious display of the power and triumph of the object and nonidentity over the subjective process of identity thinking. Thus, Adorno's conception of artwork's enigmaticalness and abundance seems to hold resonance with the Kantian sublime, which in its quantitative and qualitative force outstrips human imaginative ability and resists human reason. The subject of aesthetic experience, similar to the sublime, recognizes through the material object's resistance to the limiting intentions of the purely conceptual, his or her own finitude and the concept's

²² AT 126

²³ AT 121

²⁴ ND 10-11

impotence.²⁵ Artworks in material and essence resist. “The subject must submit to the discipline of the work [of art] rather than demand that the artwork give him something.”²⁶

As a sort of redemption, though, there is an access to the truth content of art “achieved only through philosophical reflection.”²⁷ This is where contemplation, as philosophical thought, meets the artwork: “Aesthetic experience is not genuine experience unless it becomes philosophy”²⁸ Contemplation, as an extension of philosophical reflection, dialectically addresses the abundant empirical elements of aesthetic experience along with the conceptual elements of cognitive experience to philosophically present a unity of genuine experience. That Adorno’s aesthetic experience couples with philosophy, forming an ambivalent relation between the empirical and the conceptual, suggests a correspondence in process to Adorno’s understanding of contemplation’s own ambivalent internal laboring between the immanent and the transcendent elements of thought.

For Adorno, aesthetic experience is nevertheless a failed enterprise, or more clearly an enterprising failure. In the same fashion that identity thinking inevitably fails to address the real object abundance of what is nonidentical in

²⁵ AT 269

²⁶ AT 275

²⁷ AT 128

²⁸ AT 131

the object, so too does the cognitive aspect fail to grasp the full meaning and significance of an artwork due to art's enigmaticalness and excess of materiality. However, only in aesthetic experience can this failure be valorized. Aesthetic resistance thus reestablishes the power of the objective, and within the artwork, the artwork's "objectivity and truth are inseparable."²⁹ In other words, "art has truth in semblance of the illusionless."³⁰ To fully understand the importance that Adorno gives to aesthetic experience, and how this truth in art's semblance manifests itself on a cultural level, we have to look at Adorno's critique of culture and culture's administration.

CULTURE CRITICISM AND CRITIQUE

Using Adorno's *Cultural Criticism and Society*, in this section I wish to present his critical method with regard to cultural criticism, and contemplation's possible role within that criticism, as well as his own criticism of culture itself. By doing this I hope to serve two purposes. First, I hope to illustrate Adorno's conception of cultural critique and to highlight his critical handling of particular methods of cultural criticism, and therein, his understanding of a form of critical contemplation that is both immanent and

²⁹ AT 129

³⁰ AT 132

transcendent. Second, and most importantly, I wish to present further what might be understood as Adorno's offering of a form of hope. This form of hope could be understood as a kind of contemplative stillness, that is not self-absorbed, as in purely wishful dreaming, but that is directed at cultural material with the purpose of liberating one's means of critically engaging culture at large. It is not the hope of an illusory, abstract utopia, but a hope embodied in a concrete method of social physiognomy.

Adorno wrote, "the semblance of freedom makes reflection upon one's own unfreedom incomparably more difficult."³¹ I would forward that Adorno's means for truly understanding this semblance of freedom is found in the dialectical movement incurred by the liberation of critical contemplation from self-satisfaction. I offer this, what might seem as a summary statement, before going into detail about the essay so as to instill a kind of cognitive cue in the reader to the short- and long-term reasons for why I am presenting the topic.

In *Cultural Criticism and Society*, Adorno states that the current meaning of ideology is "society as appearance."³² To be able to truly address the nature of society and criticize this appearance he postulates that cultural

³¹ CCS 21

³² CCS 31

criticism must become a form of “social physiognomy.”³³ As such, this criticism would attempt to contemplate these socially necessary appearances as one might take in the auguries at the temple: i.e. to search for the illusionless in the semblance of culture. Not surprisingly, Adorno’s preferred attempt at social physiognomy, his own form of cultural criticism, is dialectical in nature and is sometimes presented as critical contemplation or critical theory.

On a very basic level, the very consideration of a cultural critique posits an external position to the elements of culture drawn into question. Through the act of criticism, the critic often maintains a quality of denial to his or her own immanent presence in that which they admonish. The critic, through criticism, simply presents him or her self as having access to an external measure of culture that can accurately determine what “culture lacks,”³⁴ and denies his or her own play in the culture they criticize. This belief that criticism can maintain a pure position outside of culture is deceptive. As Adorno writes, “even the implacable rigour with which criticism seeks the truth of an untrue consciousness remains imprisoned within the orbit of that against which it struggles, fixated on its surface manifestations.”³⁵ The critic’s process of criticism cannot escape the object of its critique; an

³³ CCS 30

³⁴ CCS 19

³⁵ CCS 20

immanent element is imbedded in the very act of criticism and must also be acknowledged.

Along with the initial comments on the very nature of cultural criticism, Adorno also positions his own dialectical approach outside and against a suspicious either/or relationship expressed in choosing between pre-existent transcendent or immanent forms of criticism. To clarify things further, aside from Adorno's critique of cultural criticism, Adorno also addresses the nature of two different types of critical approaches to culture. He describes these two types as "either calling culture as whole into question from outside under the general notion of ideology, or confronting it with the norms which itself has crystallized."³⁶

The first is considered the transcendent method; the second one is termed the immanent method. For Adorno, both of these forms of criticism have certain strengths and weaknesses, the greatest weakness of all is their over self-satisfaction. It is only within Adorno's negative dialectical form, the non-self-satisfied form of critical contemplation, that an effective form of cultural criticism can be found; one which compensates for the faults of the other two by resisting the simple black and white approaches to culture that they present, and forcing reified thought into dialectical motion.

³⁶ CCS 31

To begin with, Adorno presents the immanent criticism of culture as developed from a critique that is culturally immersed, attempting to recognize culture as a whole from an internal locus. The immanent critique is essentially more dialectical than the transcendent form. It works from within culture, alongside notions of historic and material specificity, it also “presupposes the questionable whole”³⁷ of society. Even though immanent criticism takes “seriously the principle that it is not ideology itself that is untrue but rather its pretension to correspond to reality” it nevertheless “overlooks what is decisive: the role of ideology in social conflicts.”³⁸

As a contraposition to immanent critique’s internally conceived image of the whole, the transcendent method assumes an external stance, an “Archimedean position above culture and the blindness of society” and aims at totality. The transcendent method thus appears more “radical”³⁹ than the immanent because of this conception of totality and push for external positioning. Adorno presents transcendent method’s emphasis upon totality as a critique to the notion of the whole within the immanent.

The weakness of the two approaches is their refusal to assume a more dialectical approach to cultural criticism. Stubborn immanent criticism “threatens to revert to idealism” by believing in the self-sufficiency of “mind

³⁷ CCS 31

³⁸ CCS 32

³⁹ CCS 31

in command of both itself and reality” Likewise, transcendent contemplation “threatens to forget the effort of conceptualization required,” relying upon “prescribed labels” and “petrified invectives.”⁴⁰ Further, Adorno views the transcendent method’s “choice of a standpoint outside the sway of existing society is as fictitious as only the construction of abstract utopias can be.”⁴¹

Most importantly, both cultural criticisms are unacceptable for Adorno’s critical theory because they assume either an external stance that draws “culture as a whole into question,” or an internal stance that confronts culture “with the norms which it itself has crystallized.” Posturing as either an intra- or extra-cultural position ultimately presents for Adorno a dialectics at a standstill. “Dialectics cannot, therefore, permit any insistence on logical neatness to encroach on its right to go from one genus to another,” and is similarly suspicious of any “opposition between knowledge which penetrates from without and that which bores from within.”⁴²

The dialectical critic “must both participate in culture and not participate” so as to “do justice to his object and to himself.”⁴³ The dialectical critic must therefore move beyond “self-satisfied contemplation,” and handle both itself and the material critically in order to resist what Adorno fears is the

⁴⁰ CCS 33

⁴¹ CCS 31

⁴² CCS 33

⁴³ CCS 33

inevitable “absorption of the mind” by the totality of delusion, which would occur as intellectual progression approaches “absolute reification,” or in other words, as the conceptual weft and warp close in ever tighter. The dialectical criticism must maintain its engagement, as well as the self-acknowledgement of its engagement with culture if it ever hopes to critically discern social physiognomy.

BILDUNG

I would like to start this section by presenting a quote taken from Adorno’s *Theory of Halbbildung*. I wish to use the quote as a sort of parameter of explication, to establish the intention and rough guidelines for this section and how I wish to address the subject of culture.

If “culture” is not to turn into disgrace and cultural fetishism, it can only be understood as the realization of an integrity and appropriateness in spiritual gestalt [...]. Yet, the spirit receives its vigor out of nothing other than what has formerly been called *Bildung*. If, however, spirit can only remain faithful to society by not dissolving into vague identity within society, it is time for the anachronism: to hold on to *Bildung* after society has withdrawn its basis.⁴⁴

⁴⁴ Theodor W. Adorno. *Gesellschaftstheorie und Kulturkritik*, “Theorie der Halbbildung” (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1975) p. 94, Abbr. TH

The term “culture” holds a double character. Culture can mean the objective elements, or the material accumulation of artifacts or cultural expressions of a group of people or society. This character could possibly be considered a society’s heritage. This societal heritage, in the tangible form of paintings, literature, or architecture, as well as the intangible forms of songs, dances, recipes or customs, can be considered the material-based forms of culture. Hierarchical notions of value or status are not necessarily considered a part of this character even though the objects can necessarily reflect those societal values. For example, bottle caps, beer cans, cell phone tones, cookbooks, or even peanut butter and jelly sandwiches and pub songs could also be considered aspects of a society’s heritage. Though they might be thought of as lacking exceptional status, nevertheless they express a particular value of the society to which they belong. Above all else, within the category of societal heritage everything of a society or group of people would be considered its cultural fingerprint.

The second aspect of culture draws more distinctions regarding its materials, and can be more broadly understood as a process of edification, education, or the cultivation of a subject by the heritage elements of a group or society. The second character thus represents a process of how the subjects of a society can be influenced or enculturated by the society’s objects or heritage. With this character of culture, hierarchical notions of value and/or worth often

become important. Questions of canons, social responsibility and ideals, “What is art?” and “Should this be considered?” become prevalent.

Central to these questions and concerns is the realization and centralization of issues surrounding the effect that the cultural material has upon the subject of society. This can be considered as an important aspect of the German term *Bildung*. The term comes from the word *bilden*, which means to accumulate, to educate, to compose, to establish and to generate. Historically, *Bildung* implied the development of the subject to the totality of his or her abilities, in essence to become self-actualized. Central to *Bildung*, as expressed in *Bildungsromane*, was usually the enforcing of cultural ideals or values upon an individual, usually forced from societal sources and experiences, although it could also come from experiences outside of society, nevertheless the external imposition upon the subject was a form of enculturation. This might be loosely considered as a transformation of the subjective interests from those of the id to those of the more socially acceptable ego.

Therefore, as mentioned above, there is a sense of cultural worth ascribed to the second characteristic. Whether this is because the usual objects for enculturation have gained appreciation over time, thereby becoming well known to the society; or whether it is because they embody or express traditional or new societal values, the objects of enculturation are usually items

with a larger social identity, and have a status different than other aesthetic objects of a culture.

A rough example might be the all-American apple pie. No one would argue that the apple pie is all American, that it holds some sense of cultural identity. Perhaps we have only to thank Chevrolet for that. Nevertheless, this value would not have been commercialized had it not already existed at some inchoate form in American culture. But I digress. That the apple pie is an icon of American cultural heritage is probably readily accepted, and not disputed. However, placing a slice of cheddar cheese on that slice of apple pie or serving it a la mode, and then presenting these as similar icons of American cultural heritage and there might be a bit of a debate on your hands. This is perhaps a forced example, but I think it roughly sketches out some of the differences.

The overall topic of material status is, however, a complex matter. Suffice it to say the cultural objects of enculturation are usually those considered to be “high” art and containing canonic or iconic values. Those of the other cultural character are often considered objects of “low” art, kitsch, simple craft-items or artifacts of a culture. There is an element to this that is also captured by Adorno’s use of the term “mass culture.”

Nevertheless, there is a type of causal chain implicit within the relation between the two characters of culture, between heritage and *Bildung*. Cultural objects exact an influence upon the subject of a society through a process of

enculturation. In turn, the subject of a society creates further cultural objects and perpetuates the values that were embodied and expressed in the previous enculturating experiences, this time though, with a slightly new historic fingerprint. Within this there seems to be an idea of evolution or developmental progression. The term evolution is questionable, though, due to humanity's ability to choose to alter culture and not merely inherit it. For Adorno, I suspect that Spengler's notion of "pseudomorphosis" would be a more accurate description of the above sequence. In his *Decline of the West*, Spengler describes pseudomorphosis as the hindering or oppressive influence of an older generation's culture on the newly developing younger culture. This seems to present an image more in line with what I suspect Adorno feared, cultural regression.

For the sake of this section of my thesis, I wish to emphasize the second character of culture, or *Bildung*, and therein, *Bildung*'s presence within the second part of this cultural causal chain, where the subject is influenced by culture in a form of enculturation. My reason is three fold. One, it is my belief that although Adorno addresses all aspects of culture, the mundane mass culture and the more highly regarded high art, he nevertheless appears to favor the side of "high" art, which is often associated with the values of *Bildung* and cultivation. Along these lines, I believe Adorno's emphasis upon the *Bildung* aspect of culture is because Adorno values critical contemplation, and because

there is an element of that within *Bildung*'s promise of self-actualization and individuation.

Second, with regard to the image of the cultural causal chain, I believe that although Adorno deals with both dynamics — how culture affects the consciousness, and consciousness affects cultural material — I would argue, though, that he chooses to enter the chain of events at the site where culture, particularly administered culture, exacts its influence upon consciousness. It is my thought that his point of origin ultimately affects how he understands — *and fears* — the possible destination of the current state of affairs, i.e. the totality of delusion. This leads to my third reason, that, once again, Adorno's hope is found in critical contemplation, and that it is this form of contemplation that can possibly remedy the current situation, and release humanity and culture, from the cyclic causal chain of decline into this totality.

To begin with, Adorno understands *Bildung* as having a double character: the potential for and history of societal critique, and the potential to promote the values of society.⁴⁵ Most important for Adorno is this first aspect, or the critical element of culture. "Culture, in the true sense, did not simply accommodate itself to humans [i.e. solely express society's values];

⁴⁵ Theodor W. Adorno, *Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, "Culture and Administration." trans. Nicholas Walker, ed. J. M. Bernstein, (New York: Routledge Classics, 2001) p. 116 Abbr. CA

but it always simultaneously raised a protest against petrified relations under which they lived, thereby honoring them.”⁴⁶

Interestingly, as an extension of the tension and resistance within the relationship between the subject and the artwork, as well as an artwork’s status as “plenipotentiary of a better praxis,”⁴⁷ and its potential for critique, culture too has the potential to release the subject from a reified mind. This occurs by not only promoting contrary values but, most importantly, resisting the subject’s subsuming intentions found in their desire for cultural continuity. “It is only through deviation from present rationality that culture displays its ratio,”⁴⁸ or reasoning. One can then understand Adorno’s call for the spirit of culture not to be dissolved into society so that culture may regain its effectiveness.

For Adorno, *Bildung* is self-contradictory and therefore has the source of its own demise built into it. For Adorno, *Halbbildung* evidences the demise of culture. *Halbbildung*, or pseudo-education can be understood as one half of the process of edification, where the values of a society are passed on without the self-actualization necessary for establishing a critical stance to those values. For example, when the values of a society are silence and submission,

⁴⁶Theodor W. Adorno, *Culture Industry: Selected Essays on Mass Culture*, “Culture Industry Revisited.” trans. Nicholas Walker, ed. J. M. Bernstein, (New York: Routledge Classics, 2001) p. 101 Abbr. CIR

⁴⁷ AT 12

⁴⁸ CA 130

the possibility for cultural critique must silently submit to the values of that society, thereby essentially sterilizing the most dynamic part of *Bildung*, namely, the possibility for critical thought and by extension, self-actualization.

For Adorno, because culture's values are taken from the same place it targets as its critique, the decline of *Bildung* to pseudo-education is inevitable. Culture diminishes its own internal elements of contradiction and societal, or self-criticism out of a desire for self-preservation. These are the very bases of *Bildung*, which would only serve purposes against culture's other interests of self-promotion and dominance of nature. The result is essentially half of a human, where self-actualization becomes semblance of such found in the pseudo-freedom of purchase power. One might then imagine that degraded freedom and dominated nature are only a few steps further along in the cultural chain of events, where eventually the call to be a good citizen becomes to be a "good consumer."

The possible resolution to this bleak outlook is, once again, found in a non-self-satisfied form of critical contemplation potentially found in spontaneous consciousness. "No matter how reified both categories [culture and administration] are in reality, neither is totally reified; both refer back to living subjects [...] spontaneous consciousness, not yet in the grips of reification, is still in a position to alter the function of [these] institution[s]."

In turn, hope is found in “critical and unflinchingly conscious”⁴⁹ relations to culture, which reveals minimal differences like chinks in the armor of the constantly presented semblance of totality, and which offer the possibility for *Bildung* in genuine experiences where the ego can become manifest through its engagement with the world.

SPUREN

As discussed previously, culture is ubiquitous and it has a double character. On the one hand, it speaks of a process of becoming, of the individual confronted by world, and ultimately being changed by the experience. This, the notion of *Bildung*, is where elements in culture challenge the individual to question and alter the way they experience the world around them. Inherent in this is the idea that the object that is encountered is perceived as something foreign to the individual. In a sense, there is a kind of shock or terror in the encounter of the new. After this initial shock, and resistance to what seems foreign, there is a subsequent yielding of one’s self to the experience. This yielding to the experience is necessary for the change to

⁴⁹ CA 130-131

occur, for the self to be actualized, that is, for the full rite of passage that is *Bildung*.

Yet, there is also another aspect to culture. An aspect to culture that can support and encourage values, and not necessarily challenge them. There is an aspect to culture that is not localized solely to the task-minded trials experienced in *Bildung*, though it can be present, and is in fact present in the form of the signposts along the path that point the way, as well as the path itself that leads the subject on his or her altering journey of self-actualization. Culture can be both the Freudian reality principle and the pleasure principle; can be both chastising and pleasing. Culture can contain the shocking terror and surreal fantasies of night dreams, or the mundane wishful thinking of daydreams. Culture has two characters, like Janus has two faces.

For Ernst Bloch, the significance of culture — and the Janus head — is the duality that culture can be both supportive and critical. This appreciation for duality is the reason for Bloch's appreciation of the elements of culture that is often considered overtly ideological, and frequently relegated to the cultural dustbin by staunch ideology critics. Preferring the cultural character of *Bildung*, with its change and upheaval of consciousness inherent in self-actualization as often expressed in old *Bildungsromane*, the ideological anti-ideologues refuse colportage and mass culture a position of worthy influence because it fails to challenge its own underlying ideology. For Bloch, however,

mass culture's worth is not in its self-criticism, but in the elements that are inherent within it that can ultimately be used for critique.

Yet, for Bloch, ideology, too, has two characters. Kitsch, colportage, "low" art, pop culture, these expressions can be used to describe the common or mass culture which contain certain ideological elements. These words, though, also serve to dismiss cultural elements that simultaneously contain values that exist beyond the purely ideological, and that have only been appropriated for use under ideological purposes. As Bloch understands it, culturally encapsulated ideology can be expressive of something more than a reified instrument of social reproduction. Ideologies contained by culture are more than the seemingly external values that are imposed from those that dominate. They also contain, in core, the shared values of humanity in the form of hopes, wishes and dreams.

False consciousness, as an expression of ideology, contains these values because it could not be consciousness without them. For example, National Socialism gained power through the manipulation of the hopes and dreams inherent in its followers.⁵⁰ The promise of ideology has no meaning without the very real human interest in its fulfillment, regardless of that fulfillment's possibility. No ideology can become consciousness without some correspondence to the desires of the individual. Bloch was aware of this, and

⁵⁰ Ernst Bloch, *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1962) p. 66 Abbr. EZ

sought to bring recognition to the aspects of culture that were dismissed for containing values deemed critically invaluable. As Habermas describes it,

“What Bloch wants to preserve for socialism, which subsists on scorning tradition, is the tradition of the scorned [...] 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.'”⁵¹

For Bloch, the mundane elements of culture that most critiques of ideology consider to be least significant become enormously important expressions of human aspirations. Thus, items of culture become tokens of their own currency, whose fixed rate of exchange is the constant of human value placed in hope.

Bloch therefore addressed all aspects of culture, easily crossing the borders between “high” and “low” art. His largest body of work, *The Principle of Hope* is an encyclopedic collection of almost all aspects of culture; nothing is too sacred or profane for his cultural analysis. The tone of Bloch’s analysis is therefore more embracing and considerate, willing to give an element of credence to parts of culture that some culture critics refused to give worth. Nevertheless, the text was originally written during World War II while Bloch lived in exile in the US, and being a strong supporter of Marxism (though extremely heterodox in his beliefs), one can understand why, and surely

⁵¹ Jürgen Habermas, *Über Ernst Bloch*, “Ein marxistischer Schelling” (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1968) p. 63.

anticipate that *The Principle of Hope* can sometimes become the soapbox for his own Marxist based criticisms of capitalist culture.

Overall, Bloch's focus is mostly centered upon the inner human qualities that drive the engines of human endeavors that are evidenced in culture, even if this often means a hearty load of Marxist criticism directed at the ideologies that warp and degrade those qualities into mere wish fulfillment. What is important to understand, though, is that this criticism is not purely and simply a blind-faith regurgitation of Marxist tract and rhetoric. Bloch's relationship to Marxist theory is fairly complex and somewhat heretical. The foundations of his criticism, although founded firmly upon Marxist theory, is nevertheless related to his more self-created heterodox Marxism that emphasizes compassionate humanism within a Marxist frame of reference rather than staunch adherence to Marxist principles and ideology. Bloch's relationship with Marxism is a tricky matter, especially for most readers in the west. Suffice it to say, without appearing too apologetic for his Marxist interests and involvements in Russia and East Germany, one could say that Marxism, as well as Stalinism and Leninism, can be taken out of Bloch's philosophy, however Bloch's philosophy could never be taken out of them. It is shame, though, that in the west one has to apologize for having such convictions.

To give an example of the typical manner of Bloch's cultural critique, in one section of *The Principle of Hope* he describes the allure of storefront windows. The storefront window is a simple and common experience for most Americans. However, in *The Principle of Hope* the storefront window is stripped bare as Bloch rifles through imagery to get to its latent promises. As in most of his writings, Bloch begins with the mundane, and then traces the lineage between wish fulfillment's material presentations and their interior hope and wish content.

“Here is a ladies' fashion shop of higher distinction: outfits gathered in to an unbelievable slimness at the height of fashion like little else in the world and yet a kind of other world: no earthly women walk like that. Here is a tailor's for general managers and for those who would like to be like them [...] At every corner the shop-window thus forms wishful dreams [...] And no one knows better when it comes to this sort of dream than the dresser who arranges its displays [...] he builds with happiness and glass.”⁵²

It nevertheless seems obvious that shop owners would want to put their best foot forward, that they too “dress to impress.” What is of key interest for Bloch is not the nature of presentation, though it is significant. For Bloch, the commodities associated with the idea of looking presentable are only important in so far as they evidence the nature of a human wish that lies behind them, that ultimately gives them their value. For Bloch, we manifest

⁵² Ernst Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 3 vol. trans. Neville Plaice, Stephen Plaice & Paul Knight, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1996) p. 342-343 Abbr. vol.1 PH1, vol.2 PH2, vol.3 PH3

our hopes and wishes in material form; even if the manifestations are poorly formulated, they express a real human value. “[Some] feel they have no creases if their trousers do not show any.”⁵³ In short, our longing for and imagining of Utopia does not come out of Nowhere.

Big business knows this. Ad campaigns, for example the one that asks what you would do for a Klondike Bar, probably express best the hostile nature of the relationship between customer and provider. The ad makes only one statement: the curving of human hopes into the bent-gait of manipulated wishful dreams, warped by the interests of commerce: merely getting a dog to do tricks for praise. Yet, to get the dog to do the trick, at some point there had to have been a bone. For Bloch, overlooking the valuable and necessary role that hopes, dreams and wishes play in ideology for the sole purpose of pointing out ideological corruption and manipulation, even if they have been manipulated for gain by “plays on the piano of wishful dreams,”⁵⁴ is addressing only half of the story and is missing out on an important tool for cultural critique. This critique will be discussed further in the next model.

What is sold is not merely the material commodity; ideologies are implicit when items are presented for purchase. Often times, however, ideologies are explicitly presented for sale without the use of a commodity. Instead of manipulating individual hopes through the illusion of purchase

⁵³ PH1 342

⁵⁴ PH1 344

power, larger social hopes and wishes — *obvious utopian visions* — are packaged and sold, promoted as national interests or identities, such as security or fatherland. Sometimes purchased out of fear, love or national pride, wars for or against vaguely defined ideals, such as *Heimat* or terrorism, are marketable to people due to the very real interests in personal safety or national pride: “Even expectant intentions with a negative content as regards self-preservation, like anxiety and fear, can likewise become passions [for purchase] no less so than hope.”⁵⁵ As Bloch writes, “the young Nazi calls out: ‘One doesn’t die for a Manifesto that one understands, one dies for one that one loves.’”⁵⁶ Thus, ideologies, whether purchased out of fear or out of pride in national identity, still express expectant emotions and a desire for hope and change, that are contained the “product’s” images of a better world — *utopia*.

As a final point, in one of Bloch’s earliest texts, *Spuren (Traces)*, images of wish fulfillment are presented in aphorisms, essays, stories, and anecdotes, and underline Bloch’s interest in acknowledging and tracing utopian elements within the relationship between humanity and materiality. There is an interesting fable in the text called *The Pearl*, which tells of a king who loses a pearl. The king, who owns many things, becomes obsessed only with finding this pearl. The world then becomes the means to his one and only intention, finding the pearl. He sends his men far and wide to find it, but to no

⁵⁵ PH1 108

⁵⁶ Ernst Bloch, *Erbschaft dieser Zeit*, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1962) p. 65. Abbr. EZ.

avail. Until one day, purely without intention, (*auf dem Wege der Absichtslosigkeit*) he finds it simply by himself. The pearl had been there all along, it could only be discovered when the king's attention, or intention, was directed elsewhere.

For Bloch, this fable expresses a form of latent potential within the relationship between material objects or objectives, and human intentions. The king searched everywhere, guided by the singular goal of finding the pearl. The pearl went undiscovered because the king's goal did not mesh with the reality of the pearls eventual location of discovery. The king was too fixated on his own ideas about how to achieve his goal of reuniting with what he found valuable, the pearl, that he was in effect blinded to other possibilities. It was only when the king was no longer blinded by his own singular intentions, that the king's goal is finally achieved, and the pearl is discovered,

Likewise, the experimental utopian elements in artworks, material items of commodity, or even storefront displays are similar, for Bloch, to the king's methods for achieving his goal of eventually being reunited with the pearl. The king sends his men far and wide to find the pearl, but no matter what is done, they come back empty handed. However, by unintentionally changing his methods the king eventually finds the pearl. That is, by forgetting what he was so desperately searching for, he eventually finds what he wanted. Bloch finds no judgment in whether the king should or should not value the pearl in material, only that the pearls worth for the king plays an important

role, It has importance of meaning for the king like utopian wishes for a better world.

The king not finding the pearl meant only that his method for finding it had simply not yet measured up to the conditions for its discovery. “Just as there are no correct paths without a destination, there are no destinations without the means of a way to reach them.”⁵⁷ For Bloch, the latent utopian visions presented in rudimentary wish fulfillment and commodity objects point to a destination whose path has yet to be set, but whose possibility is implicit in its utopian valuation and establishment as a human goal, and the mediation of this goal by the objective possibility and tendency of material conditions.

UTOPIA

Time is of the essence for Bloch, and the present is crucial. It is the inheritor of cultural material, traces from the past in which illuminating latent hopes and wishes are contained. It is also the pivotal moment for the future, where paths are set and goals are established. And yet, the lived moment is a dark one. As the Japanese proverb goes, “the darkest place is under the lighthouse.” Or similarly, as Bloch writes, “Only what is just coming up or

⁵⁷ Ernst Bloch, *Spuren*, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1970) p. 219-220 Abbr. SP

what has just passed has the distance which the beam of growing consciousness needs to illuminate it.”⁵⁸

Like the dark of night behind the light of the stars, the darkness of the lived moment supports the distant luminescence of the latent hopes of humanity. It is because these hopes still have a connection to human interest and potential, because they have anticipation, expectancy, a yet-to-be about them, that these hopes still shine. So long as our hopes, like stars, still luminesce, humans will always strive for them. Human hungering fissions need against desire to illuminate the darkest of moments with hope. The hope of the present in turn shines its light into future possibility. Utopia then embodies the cultural surplus of hope in the world, but is, nevertheless, not of the world: “it contains the spark that reaches out beyond the surrounding emptiness.”⁵⁹

For Bloch, the current moment holds the future in nuce: as an openness that makes itself obvious to the anticipatory consciousness that is in touch with latent human hopes and the tendencies of material possibility. Humanity is driven forward by our drives into what we anticipate to be our hunger’s satiation.

⁵⁸ PH1 287

⁵⁹ Ernst Bloch, *Durch die Wüste Frühe Kritische Aufsätze*, “Die Landesgrenze des Nihilismus” (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag 1981) p114

“All other drives are derived from hunger; and henceforth every longing turns upon the desire to find satisfaction in the what and somewhat that accord with it and are outside it. [...] all that lives must tend towards something, or must move and be on its way to something; [...] in its restlessness the void satisfies beyond itself the need that comes from itself. This kind of want is soon answered, as if there had been no question, no problem. But satisfaction is always transitory; need makes itself felt again, and must be considered in advance, above all to ensure its disappearance not merely as hunger and deficiency, but as lack of what is most necessary.”⁶⁰

The present is a crucible filled with a mixture of drives, anticipations, hopes, latent utopian imagery and material tendencies. The lived moment — laden with culture that is informed by these hungering anticipatory drives, the utopian images and objective material tendencies — becomes a kind of Archimedean point of intersection where revolutionary changes can take place. However, rather than Archimedes’ idea that the world’s tipping point is best from an external vantage, human anticipatory consciousness recognizes that the point of change is an internal melding point where all future elements come into their own, together, in the present. This is the point where the “moving” of the world along its future path is expressed as the momentary crucible of elemental change, rather than the purely physical change exacted by forces and fulcrums. The present is the dark moment when the future is cast in the casting forward of our hopes.

⁶⁰ Ernst Bloch, *Tübinger Einleitung in die Philosophie*, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag 1970) p.14-15 Abbr. TEP

A possible way to visualize this is to imagine someone running to catch a baseball. As she is running, she is internally measuring her momentary experiences while gauging the movements of the baseball. The threshold of her awareness, of her own senses, limits her experiences. She is measuring her momentum, firing neurons to speed up or slow down, to stretch out her hand, all based upon the information that she perceives and can process in time. All of her movements are gauged against the falling baseball with the intention of catching it. And yet, exactly where the baseball is is slightly different from where it is perceived. There is a delay, a darkness in the perceptual, lived moment when the gloved hand reaches out for the ball. Having trained numerous times before, the body and mind assume where the ball will be based on what was previously experienced, certainty is not a part of movement though. There are always errors, miscalculations. If we could see the present moment exactly as it was passing, no one would ever miss a fly ball on the first time.

For Bloch, the present is the point of intersection between past latency, present tendencies and an anticipated future. It is where anticipatory consciousness freely strikes while the iron is hot, so as to bring about change for a better future. "There is a driving in things in which our affairs can still be conducted, a Front in which our future, precisely this, can be decided." However, change must be intended, must be enacted. In this act of free

intention lies the possibility for success or failure, or above all else, disappointment. “Such changeable material is by no means self-evident: there could in fact also be nothing new under the sun.”⁶¹

For hope, therein lies the rub. Disappointment is a necessary part of hope, whether or not the desired outcome was actualized. For Bloch, without the possibility to be disappointed, there could be no hope. Hope does not produce certainty, even if it sometimes indicates inevitability. “Hope is the opposite of certainty, the opposite of a naïve optimism [...] Hope is critical, is disappointable, hope nails a flag on the mast of a ship, without regard for the possibility of its own demise.”⁶² Nevertheless, disappointment is necessary. It can point out the failings of the utopian imagery or one’s understanding of the real objective possibilities for such a utopian vision. Either way, as an experiment and its results, hope and disappointment can be insightful, and critical.

At the core of utopian imagery is the notion that something is missing. Anticipatory consciousness posits the finding of that something temporally, and not just spatially: utopia is in the future, and not necessarily around the corner.⁶³ What is missing in the present moment finds expression in this expectant and anticipatory future longing. Thus, any utopian image of the

⁶¹ PH1, 288

⁶² TLU 367

⁶³ TLU 352

future can be understood as an indictment of the failings of the present, especially when one is disappointed at the results of past ventures. While utopia is an empty, negative category, literally contained in its meaning: *nowhere*, it is also filled with hope contents that are nevertheless determined by past and present absences or insufficiencies, and that are imagined to be fulfilled in the future. The past and present inform the future, both objective and subjective inform anticipatory consciousness: the utopian imagery of the oasis lives in the desert. Utopia is therefore a critique of the non-existent,⁶⁴ or the “badly existing,”⁶⁵ that exists in the current cultural moment.

Before moving forward, it is important to clarify at least a difference in terminology that Bloch uses. The badly existent is often considered the material forms of false consciousness, however the term false consciousness becomes dubious, or at least sticky, when considering Bloch. The ideologies usually associated with false consciousness, for Bloch, are significant in that they harbor the very utopian imagery that informs the present moment as well as any forward movement into the next change. As Walter Benjamin put it, “Every epoch dreams its successor.”

Even though, Bloch agrees with the underlying principles behind the ideas of true and false consciousness, the notions of a “false” or “true”

⁶⁴ TLU 362

⁶⁵ PH1 147

however, have to be handled carefully. Any judgment of consciousness, which implies a “false” or “true” based upon its possibility for manipulation and dominance, overlooks the elements that allow for ideology’s domination: namely the use of utopian imagery and the significance of hope for humanity. In Bloch’s terms, though Marxist approved “true” consciousness is founded in a form of anticipatory consciousness, or the Not-Yet-Conscious, which “as a whole is the psychological representation of the Not-Yet-Become in an age and its world, on the Front of the world,”⁶⁶ it is nevertheless connected to the underlying hope images of the ideologies it hopes to liberate humanity from.

As a contrast to “true” consciousness though, Not-Yet-Consciousness can be further understood as a “point of contact between dreams and life, without which dreams only yield abstract utopia, life only triviality” and is “given the utopian capacity which is set on its feet and connected to the Real-Possible.”⁶⁷ In short, Not-Yet-Consciousness contains important elements which concepts such as true and false consciousness lack, namely the notion of hope and dreams. So long as Marxism maintains a distance from such human aspirations, it ignores its own connection to those very wishes it calls

⁶⁶ PH1 127

⁶⁷ PH1 145-146

upon to bring about change. For Bloch, a Marxism without hope would be “setting heaven on earth without the music.”⁶⁸

Furthermore, even though “shop-windows and advertising are in their capitalist form exclusively lime-twigs for the attracted dream birds,”⁶⁹ the promises culture makes can nevertheless illustrate the power of wish thinking, and subsequently the power of hope and utopian visions with regard to ideology, even if the consumer’s desires have been falsely based upon falsely informed needs. Ideology is thus the two-faced Janus head, containing attributes that dominate and manipulate, but it also contains the latent surplus of utopian imagery and wish thinking that not only enable the dominance and manipulation, but most importantly, make possible the very forward dreaming and persistent striving against that manipulation and domination. In other words, ideology could not manipulate and dominate without the presumed invested interest of the followers, and yet within the ideology is the hope imagery that eventually leads the followers to venture beyond it. However, the recognition of the latent hopes in ideologies can be used as a means to critique the ideology and the culture due to the inherent inconsistencies and contradictions between what is shown and what is available.

Nevertheless, the badly existing (what might be called the Not-Yet-Being of a future utopia) becomes a crucial point for a utopian social critique.

⁶⁸ Ernst Bloch, *Geist der Utopie*, Zweite Fassung (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag 1964) p. 304.

⁶⁹ PH1 344

Even though “concrete utopia stands on the horizon of every reality” and “real possibility surrounds the open dialectical tendencies and latencies to the very last,”⁷⁰ the badly existing often obscures the path to the utopian horizon. The cultural critique that utopian imagery offers is then negatively informed by the obstruction of the badly existing. In other words, the badly existent presents itself as the existence against which the utopian imagery forms itself. This imagery is necessarily informed by anticipatory consciousness’ dialectical handling of latent subjective hopes and material objective tendencies. Think once again on the example of the person trying to catch the baseball. In anticipation of catching the ball, one has to mediate between internal drives towards the goal, previous experiences that inform the action and the physical evidence of where the ball is heading so as to hope to be successful. Utopian imagery as informed by anticipatory consciousness essentially contrasts the real-possibility of the present moment with the contradictions of the real, or badly existent. For Bloch, the utopian function of visioning a better world becomes the foundation for countermoves against the cultural existence that blocks actualization of this real-possibility.

These countermoves, however, should not be understood as establishing a kind of defensive perimeter of resistance to the encroaching of bad existent, but are rather militantly optimistic, and remain persistent in their

⁷⁰ PH1, 223

forward motion against the badly existing and towards the future.⁷¹ In other words, Bloch's form of countermove could be understood as a persistence of revolutionary action, where action could be understood as the utopian anticipatory function which moves forward dialectically uniting both the surplus of subjective utopian imagery and the objective tendential conditions that are necessary to "[mobilize] the contradictions within the badly existing"⁷² and thereby overcome the material resistance to that the badly existing represents.

AESTHETICS' PERSISTENCE

"Every great work of art ... still remains, except for its manifest character, impelled towards the latency of the other side, i.e. towards the contents of a future which had not yet appeared in its own time, if not towards the contents of as yet unknown final state."⁷³

For Bloch, creative genius is the melding of anticipatory consciousness with the imagination of the objectively Possible. "A cultural tendency without the creative genius remains... a blank page."⁷⁴ It is the last of his three forms

⁷¹ PH1 148-149

⁷² PH1 248

⁷³ PH1 127

⁷⁴ Bloch, Ernst, *The Utopian Function of Art and Literature: Selected Essays*, trans. Jack Zipes & Frank Mecklenburg, (Cambridge, The MIT Press, 1988) p. 38 Abbr. UFA

of productivity: *incubation, inspiration and explication*,⁷⁵ and can be understood as the task of the artistic genius. Different than the spontaneity of inspiration, and ruminations of incubation, the genius works with the work of art is itself “hard work, but of a kind which never wants to allow the elaboration to grow stale or to be anything less than a constant obsession.”⁷⁶ The Not-Yet-Conscious coupled with the Not-Yet-Become allows the genius to create a work of art that crosses the horizon “towards the contents of yet unknown final state.” Genius, then, is for Bloch the “password to the premonition of the age.”⁷⁷

It is important to point out that the historic notion of artistic genius is usually associated more with inspiration. This is, as Bloch describes it, where there is a flash of light from the concordance of subjective tendencies and objective tendencies.⁷⁸ Genius has, as to yet, been confused with the flash of anticipatory consciousness, and not connected to the labor process necessary to render a representation thereof in artistic form. For Bloch, the true genius occurs after the flash of insight, in the diligent working of this flash, maintaining its luminescence in the midst of the world, expanding upon it: “the agonizing, blissful work of *explication*.”⁷⁹ In the process of a work of art’s becoming, the anticipatory thoughts of the Not-Yet-Conscious, in

⁷⁵ PH1 122

⁷⁶ PH1 125

⁷⁷ PH1 126

⁷⁸ PH1 122

⁷⁹ PH1 125

combination with materiality, evidences a unity between materiality and consciousness that takes its symbolic and real form in the work of art.

The greatness of an artwork is its availability. Availability can be understood as the recognition of the unity in material and consciousness. This acknowledgement of the unity then allows for the artwork's openness to hermeneutic meaning, as well as the artwork's maintained connection to tendential elements that cross the horizon of Becoming over the course of time. Works of art therefore, as stated before, can have an essence of latency, a remainder of elements that can be accessed in the future. It is this access, the possibility for openness that makes latency important for Bloch: "the itself already shaped openness in great artistic creations gives the material and the form for a cipher of the authentic."⁸⁰ If a work of art's meaning or truth content were not accessible, if the flash of insight made available through anticipatory consciousness was not able to be labored into the work of art, then the notion of an artwork's latency would seem impossible: materiality as such would be closed to consciousness.

Most importantly, the notion of latency itself would not hold within Bloch's system. Latency implies a space, a symbolic opening within the work that allows for the potential of latency. As a sort of time capsule, or more accurately, a time bomb, the work of art is latent utopian imagery that

⁸⁰ PH1 219

becomes available as the tendency of a time allows its contents to spill forth to the discerning mind. “Only controlled history, with an incisive counter-move against inhibitions, with active promotion of tendency, can help essential material in the distance of art to become increasingly also appearance in the dealings of life.”⁸¹

What is important for the efficacy of latency within the work of art is not only material openness, but also Bloch’s idea of “artistic appearance as visible pre-appearance”⁸² Bloch asserts that all good art “finishes its materials...in beautiful appearance.” He then asks, though, “What is the *honest* status to this finish, of a ripeness in which only invented material ripens?”⁸³ Ripens in this sense implies the elements of latency, similar to the idea of latency found in Schiller’s statement about the return of beauty once experienced, but this time as truth. In this sense, keeping in mind Bloch’s notion of genius as the password to the premonition of the age, artistic appearances, then, are a kind of foreshadowing of what is yet to come.

Appearance is a concept that has a long history within the philosophy of art, particularly with regard to questions of truth content. In Bloch’s hands, the concept of appearance takes on a new temporal depth. For Bloch, the philosophical question of a work of art’s truth is more than simply a question

⁸¹ PH1 216

⁸² PH1 210

⁸³ PH1 211

of its content. It is also a question of the possible object-correlate in the world that presents the “available depictability of beautiful appearance.”⁸⁴ In other words, it is implied in the very questioning of an appearance’s possible truth content that there can be no corresponding element in the material existence of reality to that appearance of truth or beauty. This only speaks of what is and what is not, but can say nothing of what is “Yet-To-Become.”

Furthermore, for Bloch,

“The answer to the question of truth is: artistic appearance is not only mere appearance, but meaning, cloaked in images and which can only be described in images, of material that has been driven further, wherever *the exaggeration and fantasizing represent a significant pre-appearance...a pre-appearance that can specifically be represented in aesthetically immanent terms.*”⁸⁵

In other words, works of art become tokens of their own currency, whose fixed rate of exchange is the constant of human value placed in hope. Along these lines, Bloch also states that the answer to the question about the truth content in art is that “art is a laboratory and also a feast of implemented possibilities.”⁸⁶ Art is therefore also an experiment by the artist with the materiality — in appearance and meaning, as well as in symbol — that forms pre-appearance by the mere forward reaching of artistic consciousness. For Bloch, artistic appearance is pre-appearance. Thus, the materiality of a work

⁸⁴ PH1 214

⁸⁵ PH1 214-215

⁸⁶ PH1 216

of art contains future projected meaning that alters the notion of mere appearance to pre-appearance. As indicative in the term, Bloch understands pre-appearance to be the material manifestation of the reaching forward of the Not-Yet-Conscious, a form of anticipatory consciousness mostly associated with genius.

With further regard to art's openness, works of art can appear enclosed, despite their openness, because they are "excessive and immanent" in their appearance. This can initially mask the pre-appearance. However, the crucial consideration is that all works of art express themselves as "broken up" and "fragment-like."⁸⁷ The fragmentary nature of the work of art points to the openness that, when coupled with the work of art's pre-appearance, allows for the work's latency. Within the fragment-like artwork a "hollow space of a factual, highly factual kind opens up, with *unrounded immanence*. And it is in this space that the *aesthetic-utopian meanings* of the beautiful, even the sublime make their appearance."⁸⁸

Along with the idea of an originary fragment there is also the "belated fragment." Fragment, though, must not be thought of as that which could not be finished or could not be done, but rather as the fragmentary nature implicit in the work of art's containment of an openness that strains its immanence. In other words, the placing of the Not-Yet-Consciousness and Becoming implicit

⁸⁷ PH1 219

⁸⁸ PH1 219

in pre-appearance within immanent materiality evidences its “work-based coherence broken.”⁸⁹ the aesthetic-utopian meanings fragment the work of art.

The belated fragment is also significant for Bloch. It is the work of art that, “at the highest level of mastery, is unclosed, of that which is *transformed through utopian pressure*.”⁹⁰ The belated fragment is the unfinished work that could have been no other way due to the sheer enormity of the task, that “no work executed could satisfy this adequation, so that in fact completion itself, driven so deeply into the Absolute, becomes a fragment.”⁹¹ Thus, the belated fragment points to the enormity of existence, the totality, and presents the subject with the knowledge not only of one’s “creatural limitation,” but also with the fragmentary nature of all the we have accomplished, “the whole of what has previously become,” as well as our knowledge,⁹² and all of it appears as the fragment of a much larger work that could never satisfy adequation. In this sense, the belated fragment is reminiscent of the Kantian sublime, where enormity and the infinite force the subjective realization of one’s own finitude: “Man is still not solid, the course of the world is still undecided, unclosed, and so also is the depth in all aesthetic information.”⁹³

⁸⁹ PH1 219

⁹⁰ PH1 220

⁹¹ PH1 220

⁹² PH1 221

⁹³ PH1 221

Bloch states that the life-maxim of Goethe was, “Often rounded, never closed.”⁹⁴ This image then conveys Bloch’s understanding of the fragment, as well as the work of art: the idea of the circle being drawn but never fully completed, in a process of completion, but never capable of being closed. The image of the spiraling effect, where the circle is never closed but always rounding, is symbolic for humanity’s attempt at improvement. Our goals are ever rounding, but never closed, never complete. As a spiral, the temporal element of its completion seems implicit in the Blochian fragment, though never complete, it’s nevertheless rounding unto itself, the intention lies in the subject-matter itself though not inherently manifest: *rebus sic imperfectis et fluentibus*, or “in the imperfect and fluid state of things.”⁹⁵

EXPERIMENTUM MUNDI

“For the world itself, just as it is in a mess, is also in a state of unfinishedness and in experimental process out of that mess.”⁹⁶

⁹⁴ PH1 217

⁹⁵ PH1 221

⁹⁶ PH1 221

Nothing is closed; even the past has latent potential to offer up material for our consideration. For Bloch, everything therefore holds a horizon, what could be considered as a kind of temporal-spatial becoming. Humanity and material are inevitably drawn forward, together towards their horizon, towards the future and what is becoming: *Heimat*.

For Bloch, “thinking is venturing beyond”⁹⁷ on the way to this future horizon. Venturing beyond, however, is not merely, blind action, striking out without thought. It is also not the act of attempting to escape the ground from beyond which you are venturing. For Bloch, venturing is the tempering of moving and standing still, it “shows *activity its centre of rest* from which it comes, to which it moves,”⁹⁸ where rest is the “contemplative stillness.”⁹⁹ Thinking’s venturing beyond is the oscillation between *vita activa* and *vita contemplativa*: the “two desirable forms of the right life.”¹⁰⁰

However, rest and contemplative stillness should not imply resignation in light of a possible failure. “Man should not settle in the vicinity of circumstances over which he has no power.”¹⁰¹ For Bloch this would be the past. Humanity and nature must move forward, for humanity to hold onto that which is not working, or that which only serves a few of humanity’s needs, then it has held on to a past, to reified thought in outmoded ideologies. For

⁹⁷ PH1 4

⁹⁸ PH3 957

⁹⁹ PH3 953

¹⁰⁰ PH3 953

¹⁰¹ PH1 247

Bloch, if the pudding tastes bad, one need reconsider the recipe, retest, re-taste, and above all else: experiment. In venturing beyond, one cannot forget the past experiences; one must build with and from within them.

For Bloch, the always rounding of human and material relations — the drive for man’s humanization of nature and nature’s naturalization of humanity — is likewise a venturing beyond, in thought and action. This venturing can best be understood as experimentation: a laboring in the world laboratory of possibility,¹⁰² where theories are brought to task in materiality’s objective possibility. For Bloch, theories must always be able to bear the weight of the material real. The practicing of a theory is the ultimate step to theory: *prius* of theory, *prima* of praxis¹⁰³, or the priority of theory is given only in the primacy of action.

For Bloch, humanity is not alone in this experimental process, just as an experiment is not formulated solely around its theories. What humanity understands as its path of identification, a process that seeks to comprehend the world around it (a common example would be scientific research, but also exemplary are the arts, religion, and philosophy), can actually be understood as expressing, for Bloch, materiality and consciousness in a unified process of *realizing* the one in the other. Thus, theory’s proof is explored in the kitchen of its material possibility, and proven in the experience of its results.

¹⁰² Ernst Bloch, *Experimentum Mundi*, (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag 1975) p. 242 Abbr. EM

¹⁰³ EM 250

For Bloch, experimentation is the never-closed process of venturing beyond, of moving forward along the path of an objective-real identification, otherwise known as a world-process.¹⁰⁴ This path of identification, then, can best be described further with Bloch's notion of "objective-real *Fortbilden*." *Fortbilden* can be translated as "continued education,"¹⁰⁵ and the objective-real is, for Bloch, the ever constant and important relationship between this education, or theory, and material experience as a proof of the education's worth. Consciousness must always remain engaged with material for this continued education to exist. There too, for Bloch, philosophy must venture beyond the site of its contemplation and interpretation into material possibility. It must "*have consciousness of tomorrow, commitment to the future, knowledge of hope, or it will have no more knowledge.*"¹⁰⁶

In the 11th Thesis, in Marx' *Theses on Feuerbach*, Marx argues against philosophy's mere interpreting of the world, and its inaction in bringing about change within it. Bloch's book *Experimentum Mundi (Experiment Earth)*, as well as his oeuvre, explains his conception of a world-process of change between consciousness and material. Most importantly, this is Bloch's answer to Marx' critique of philosophy, which might also be considered Marx' dilemma: how can philosophy — *thought* — change the world? In *Experimentum Mundi*, Bloch explains his understanding of a notion of ever-

¹⁰⁴ EM 242

¹⁰⁵ EM 242

¹⁰⁶ PH1 7

unfolding world-process of experimentation that exemplifies the unification that Marx seeks. That of action united with contemplation, theory with praxis.

Furthermore, the idea that the proof is in the pudding's tasting encapsulates the idea that the testing of theory is the fundament for all knowledge, including philosophy. Therefore, the mere philosophic interpretation that Marx questions becomes the active engagement in material possibility as it directs and conducts its experimentations towards a future horizon of a possible utopian resolution. In essence, a theory is then the preparatory work for the eventual application and testing of that theory through experience. In time, experiences accumulate and deepen; knowledge becomes finer articulated in thought and action, and the identification process yields the unity of thought and practice in the evidence of consciousness' and nature's fundamental relation to one another.

Nonetheless, there is always the unknown, what lies outside the unclosed roundness of human experimentation, just on the other side of the horizon. That which is not known, the non-identity or the non-identifiable, for Bloch is merely an expression of the Not-Yet, either as Not-Yet-Become or Not-Yet-Conscious. With an objective relation to the real possibility, consciousness holds the potential to seek and eventually find the identity so long as the material conditions allow. Humanity has yet to achieve what it can, just as materiality — expressed most fundamentally in the very process of

artistic creation — has yet to become all that it can be in relationship to human consciousness.¹⁰⁷

The achievement of such a relationship, however, may never occur. There are no guarantees within hope, or else it would not be hope. Once again, hope contains the possibility for its disappointment, but in that also the cause for its renewal: *From error's sea to rise, hope still renews!*¹⁰⁸ Within the notion of experimentation, there is an internal expression of hope in that its theories are formed within the future directed realm of anticipatory consciousness: *Reason her voice resumes; returneth Hope's gracious bloom.*¹⁰⁹ It is important, though, to stress the necessary relationship between material and consciousness, for Bloch. The workings of reason is not humanity's exacting of dominance over nature through an eventual application of knowledge, but rather it is a form of worldly self-enacted pursuit of self-knowledge, where reality grasps or gathers itself from and through itself.¹¹⁰ "If something is properly realized, life comes to a place where it has never been, that is, it comes home."¹¹¹

Lastly, for Bloch, the end of this world experimentation manifests itself as the discovery of a home, *Heimat*, for humanity on a planet that houses it. In other words, the discovery of utopia. Yet, *Heimat* is also of nature's

¹⁰⁷ SP 32

¹⁰⁸ Goethe's *Faust*, www.tonykline.co.uk/PITBR/German/Fausthome.htm

¹⁰⁹ Goethe's *Faust*, www.tonykline.co.uk/PITBR/German/Fausthome.htm

¹¹⁰ EM 253

¹¹¹ PH1 288

construction. For Bloch, Marx' concern for the 'development of the wealth of human nature' expresses the unity that Bloch finds within his world experiment; as he describes it, "this *human* wealth as well as that of *nature* as a whole lies solely in the tendency-latency in which the world finds itself."¹¹² This tendency-latency of the world is towards this *Heimat*, which is formed of humanity's nature and nature itself. However, this *Heimat*, as stated above, is not human reason's exacted dominance over nature, that would be the faulty image of Paradise. Paradise, also known as the Garden of Eden, is where everything has its name as given by man. In the Garden of Eden, humanity was *given* its home. Furthermore, in Eden, "humanity remains child-like and has not yet conceptually grasped the meaning of existence for itself. In this situation, paradise is the parental house which humanity has yet to make home."¹¹³

For Bloch, that humanity ate from the tree of knowledge is not the end of paradise, but its origin. With the first bite from the fruit of that tree, the "first manifestation of redeeming knowledge" occurs, and man is "lead out of the garden of animals, indeed out of the dreadful paternal home."¹¹⁴ *Heimat* grasps its roots in the form of this "redeeming knowledge" and establishes "without expropriation and alienation, in real democracy" what belongs to humanity, then "there arises in the world something that shines into the

¹¹² PH3 1375

¹¹³ John Miller Jones, *Assembling (Post)modernism: The Utopian Philosophy of Ernst Bloch*. (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 1995) p. xv Abbr. AP

¹¹⁴ PH3 1269

childhood of all and in which no one has yet been: homeland [*Heimat*].”¹¹⁵ For Bloch, our considerations of utopia are not formed from where we have come, but are directed at where the world is headed: “True genesis is not at the beginning, but at the end.”¹¹⁶

CONCLUSION

In closing, I would like to bring the two sections of my thesis together for one last analysis. In doing so, I would like to address the models individually. This might be confusing due to the nature of the thesis, so I will outline the direction a little bit before I begin. For the sake of simplicity, I will work through the models in the order that I presented them in Adorno’s section. The first model being titled Contemplation for Adorno, for Bloch this was the last segment and was titled *Experimentum Mundi*. The next model dealt with each philosopher’s aesthetic theory, and was titled Resistance Aesthetics for Adorno, and Aesthetics’ Persistence for Bloch. Following that is the model that deals with critique and culture. This model was titled Culture Criticism Critique for Adorno, Utopia for Bloch. The last model to be addressed is the model dealing with culture as a whole. For Adorno this segment was titled *Bildung*, and for Bloch it was titled *Spuren*.

¹¹⁵ PH3 1375-1376

¹¹⁶ PH3 1375

One of the aspects I wished to address in the first model, the first for Adorno, the last for Bloch, was what I regard as a general approach and element of emphasis within each of the philosopher's theories. I also wanted to point out how Adorno and Bloch dealt with Marx' call for philosophers to do more than "interpret the world;" that is, how they dealt with a need to effect change in the world through a unified theory and practice. Finally, I wanted to present what I perceive to be the nature of their individual notions of hope as expressed in this unity.

For Adorno, this can be presented in the notion of a non-self-satisfied contemplation. In general, it is my argument that Adorno's emphasis falls to the side of theory, within the theory-practice dichotomy. Although he unifies the two, more weight is given to thought. As stated, Adorno perceived thought in the terms of action. For Adorno, it was an underappreciated act, due to the emphasis by most Marxist upon action in the form of practice and revolution. Nevertheless, for Adorno, mental labor was as effective, if not more so, in bringing about change than physical labor. To be able to effectively affect change, one had to change the manner in which one thought before addressing the task of revolutionary change.

One can see this in an example taken from his life. In 1968, when the German student movement was at its height, students read a theory of revolution into Adorno's Critical Theory. This resulted in what Adorno considered as a kind of radical anti-intellectualism that relied more on a reactionary praxis rather than a structured, theoretically sound approach to the

legislative problems that the students faced. In turn, the students harshly criticized Adorno for not playing a more active role in the movement and for ultimately criticizing it. However, Adorno remained resistant to and critical of the movement. If only by example, this can illustrate the nature of Adorno's approach to change. Emphasizing the importance of a strong, unified theory that could address the problems, he placed the need for an appropriate theory before any form of action.

Bloch, on the other hand, offers a different life illustration. After leaving Socialist East Germany for Tübingen, in West Germany, Bloch became a professor, and to some great degree became an active father figure to the students in the movement of 1968. Bloch was by no means a proponent of blind radical action. One of his phrases, "Theory as a key, Practice as a lever" expresses his call for unity between theory and practice, like Adorno. However, Bloch also emphasized the application of theory, the testing of the pudding so to speak. For Bloch, the student movement was an expression of the difficulties faced by the youth at the time, a kind of necessary social experiment to find their voices.

It is important to note the nature of the difference between Bloch and Adorno's varied emphases. Bloch's experimentation, as stated above emphasizes the practice side of the dichotomy. This is not to say he was against "*vita contemplativa*." For Bloch, still contemplation was important in so far as it found its voice and application in the external world through practice. Adorno's contemplation, though emphasizing the side of the

theoretical, is an act that ultimately relates to practice without the immediate need for revolutionary action. One might say that Adorno was more a proponent for resistance to dominating forces. That is, not giving in to the pressure to act radically, regardless of the cause, is a form of practice, i.e. one of resistance. I would also argue that contemplation captures this notion of practical resistance, and expresses itself as the means for eliciting change for Adorno. In this sense, contemplation is his expression of hope.

The only philosophy that can be responsibly practiced in face of despair is the attempt to contemplate all things as they would present themselves in light of redemption. Knowledge has no light but that shed on the world by redemption: all else is reconstruction, mere technique. Perspectives must be fashioned that displace and estrange the world, reveal it to be, with its rifts and crevices, as indignant and distorted as it will appear one day in the messianic light.¹¹⁷

For Bloch, the unity of theory and practice occurs in the application of the theory. Therefore, there is an element of the revolutionary within his work. Most of all, the notion of experimentation allows for a persistence with regard to the application of radical thought within new forms of practice. Bloch, then, seems more open to the possibility of affecting change, and less cautious. This is possibly due to his idea that there is a material tendency and a latency connected to such social movements, a sense of inevitability about them. Therefore, where Bloch has more trust in the course of events, taking a more prospective view, Adorno, on the other hand, is more circumspect.

¹¹⁷ Theodor W. Adorno. *Minima Moralia*, trans. E.F.N. Jephcott. (London: Verso 2002) p. 247
Abbr. MM

I believe that one can see this in their aesthetic theories as well. In the second model, the one dealing with their theories on art, Adorno's theory can be more closed with regard to the aesthetic experience than Bloch's. This is why I consider Adorno's aesthetic theory to express a tone of resistance, and Bloch's, a tone of persistence. To explain, Adorno's aesthetic experience is a tense relation between the subject and the artwork that ultimately leads to the failure of the subject in actualizing an all-encompassing meaning around the work of art. The materiality of the artwork, then, presents a kind of resistance due to its abundance and the artwork's enigmaticalness. Ultimately, the meaning of the artwork lies mostly within the subject, which is left with the sense of failure, and a greater awareness of materiality and subjective ineffectualness.

Bloch's aesthetic experience, on the other hand, is one of fragmented, unenclosed works of art that hold latent utopian imagery. Because the meaning is expressed in a unity between material and consciousness, and has potential for sort of latent effect upon the subject, the artwork itself is open and reachable. Consciousness is able to reach into the "depths" so as to discern the spirit in the material, the essence of anticipatory consciousness that exists within the material. Artworks then become time bombs that expose themselves as the tendency of materiality meets with the latency of utopian imagery in the present moment, and radicalize the moment with possibility. This is essential for Bloch, the possibility expressed within the aesthetic

experience, and aesthetic appearance as pre-appearance. One can see that

Bloch takes careful note of Marx' comment in *Capital*:

“A spider conducts operations that resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts to shame many an architect in the construction of her cells. But what distinguishes the worst architect from the best of bees is this, that the architect raises his structure in imagination before he erects it in reality. At the end of every labour-process, we get a result that *already existed* [author's italics] in the imagination of the labourer at its commencement.”¹¹⁸

The raising of the structure in the imagination is extremely important for Bloch. This is, in essence, his consideration of the pre-appearance of works of art. The anticipatory consciousness that expresses itself in the creative imaginative act of genius, for Bloch, is the pre-appearance of the better world.

Adorno's aesthetic theory, on the other hand, establishes a *Bildverbot* with regard to any utopian content in artistic imagery. The idea behind this is that art is incapable of manifesting any imagery of utopia. “Art is no more able than theory to concretize utopia, not even negatively. A cryptogram of the new is the image of collapse; only by virtue of the absolute negativity of collapse does art enunciate the unspeakable: utopia.”¹¹⁹ In other words, art is incapable of producing any viable imagery of utopia due to utopia's negative element: its critique of the present historic moment. If utopia is an image of what is missing and what should be, the image is in all likelihood contingent upon the

¹¹⁸ <http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1867-c1/ch07.htm>

¹¹⁹ AT 32

needs of the moment, and non-descript with regard to any concrete image of what the better world would look like.

What is important to note is that Bloch never states that the image contained within artistic pre-appearance, Fritz Lang's *Metropolis* for example, is necessarily a blueprint for utopia, or even dystopia. Bloch's conception is that anticipatory consciousness, in its striving forward, has imagination as its tool and thereby drafts images of the way things could be. The key is in the material tendencies that enable the possibility for these hopes to come into being. What is important is not necessarily the nature or the amount of hope-formed utopian imagery that exists, but rather that the imagery does exist and that hope is an implicit principle that can be educated — *docta spes* — and directed to a better future.

Along these lines, it becomes obvious why the third model, cultural criticism, was named Utopia for Bloch's section. Since utopia is a negative concept, it can play a significant role in cultural criticism. By depicting a better world, a critique is established regarding the failings of the present world. For Bloch, cultural critique is measured against what it has failed to be actualized. This is established by a comparison of the current moment to previous visions of a better world found in latent utopian imagery, which act as regulative ideals. For Bloch, the possibilities of a better world become the critiques of the present world and the foundations of what should be done to reach the goals of that better world. The comparison of the bad reality to the

Not-Yet-Become, or the not-yet-actualized elements of a better world found in utopia imagery are the measurements of cultural success or failure for Ernst Bloch. For Bloch, the past is the means and not the measure of future possibility.

Adorno, on the other hand, establishes his cultural criticism around the barbarism of the past. This measures the success or failure of the current cultural moment for Adorno based on what has happened and what will in all probability continue to happen unless things are changed.

Hitler has imposed a new categorical imperative upon humanity in the state of their unfreedom: to arrange their thinking and conduct, so that Auschwitz never repeats itself ... Auschwitz irrefutably demonstrated the failure of culture. That it could happen in the midst of all the traditions of philosophy, art and the enlightening sciences, says more than that these traditions and their Spirit lacked the power to take hold of men and work a change in them. There is untruth in those fields themselves, in the autarky that is emphatically claimed for them. All culture after Auschwitz, including its urgent critique, is garbage.¹²⁰

Adorno therefore establishes this categorical imperative as a statement that the barbarism of Auschwitz should never be repeated. Similarly, after Auschwitz, poetry would be barbarism.¹²¹ The horrors of the past become evidence for his conviction that culture is necessary and lacking. “Whoever pleads for the maintenance of this radically culpable and shabby culture becomes its

¹²⁰ ND 365

¹²¹ CCS 34

accomplice, while the man who says no to culture is directly furthering the barbarism which our culture showed itself to be.”¹²² Once again, contrary to Bloch, Adorno measures the current failings of culture based on what has happened, and the probability that things will not change.

“Not to be denied for that reason, however, is the unity that cements the discontinuous, chaotically splintered moments and phases of history—the unity of the control of nature, progressing to rule over men, and finally to that over men’s inner nature. No universal history leads from savagery to humanitarianism, but there is one leading from the slingshot to the megaton bomb.”¹²³

For Bloch, however, the past is merely the means to the present. The ability for change is measured by the goals that we establish for ourselves — as expressed in cultural values — and the real-objective possibility of achieving them. The standard for our behavior is formulated upon our goals and not necessarily our failures, though they can be insightful. Once again, what is key here is the difference in emphasis that Bloch and Adorno have. Neither ignores the experiences of the past or possibilities of the future; they only emphasize one over the other.

Finally, with regard to culture proper and not necessarily its critique, the fourth and last model seems to emphasize what Adorno understands culture to mean, namely *Bildung*. The idea of *Bildung* is expressed in the above

¹²² ND 367

¹²³ Theodor Adorno, *Negative Dialectics*, (New York: Continuum, 2004), p. 320.

quote: “that these traditions and their Spirit lacked the power to take hold of men and work a change in them.” For Adorno, the lack of *Bildung*, or even the culpable shabbiness of the *Bildung* emphasizes the problem: a society of barbarism or a society founded upon the semblance of freedom. It illustrates how he views culture itself; that is, as a form of edification, as an educator and a critic of societal values. This explains his criticizing culture for becoming *Halbbildung*, essentially only doing half of its job. “Even if it touches the lives of innumerable people, the function of something is no guarantee of its particular quality.”¹²⁴ Most importantly for Adorno, this quality of culture is important for the purpose of cultivating the members of a society, of enabling self-actualization reminiscent to the historic notion of *Bildung*.

Bloch, on the other hand, views culture as a collection of tradition, an inherited heritage that is rich in utopic imagery and latent potential. For Bloch, culture also has an effect upon the individual, but what is most important is the nature of the effect, and the potential that exists within. Whereas Adorno is concerned about the nature and the quality of the message that current culture represents Bloch recognizes within the most mundane, capital-corrupted piece of culture evidence of something more: a longing for something beyond. Where as Adorno seems to imply the possibility for a totalized administrated culture, that could be thought of as a totality of delusion, or

¹²⁴ CIR 102

total dominance, Bloch allows for latent elements to be liberated and to liberate. For Bloch, culture is affirming of human endeavors, one need only have the right reading glasses so as to read the signs.

This also relates to a distinction I have tried to make between Adorno's resistance and Bloch's persistence. It is my belief that since Bloch is focused on future possibility and is not as strongly conditioned by — *i.e.* *pessimistic due to* — the past, that he is more willing to experiment, to find value in a hope that is not hesitant or overly circumspect, but that experiments further. This can also be seen in his notion of militant optimism. Therefore, Bloch is more persistent in his future interests. His aesthetic theory embodies this in its conception of the artwork as a latent utopian possibility that moves forward across the horizon of time, waiting for its future moment.

Adorno, on the other hand, values resistance, and tension. “Where the thought transcends the bonds it tied in *resistance*—there is freedom”¹²⁵ Adorno's considerations of hope is a contemplation that resists an over-determinate role with regard to the object, and that also resists the self-satisfaction of still contemplation and the idea that its thoughts are the entirety. For Adorno, his hope is the contemplative act that seeks its way through and against itself, its own dominance found in the concept. His hope is circumspect, hesitant to let the categorical imperatives of the past go

¹²⁵ ND 17

unnoticed or forgotten.

Ultimately, though, like the Janus head Bloch and Adorno create a complimentary image. Where one picks up, the other has left off. In his essay, “A Grotesque Conversation Between the Two Janus Heads”¹²⁶ Bloch presents the Janus head in conversation with itself on New Year’s Eve. In the essay, the “Morning Head” and the “Evening Head” are having a conversation about what has happened and what is yet to be. The Evening Head says, “From where I am, everything I see is horrible. Hitler, Starvation in the Third World, Vietnam...” and the Morning Head agrees. “What you say is correct. But there were also good things. And the critique that you have is reliant upon a standard, that can measure what is bad.”¹²⁷ In this, Bloch implies the nature of critique is the placement of what is desired, what is hoped for, next to what exists as a form of comparison. This utopian standard is always projected into the future. Whether or not what is hope for is possible or highly improbable, it is still a means to measure the value of what is in the present moment while on the way to a hopefully better future.

¹²⁶ PMPV 429

¹²⁷ PMPV 430

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