BLOCH, Ernst (July 8, 1885, Ludwigshafen - August 4, 1977, Tübingen)

Ernst Bloch was a German Marxist philosopher. Fleeing the Nazis in 1934, he lived in exile in Switzerland, France, Czechoslovakia, and the USA. In 1949 he returned to a chair of philosophy in Leipzig (GDR) and, after the erection of the Berlin Wall (1961), in Tübingen (FDR). Bloch’s eccentric Marxism did not become popular until 1968. His *The Spirit of Utopia* (1923), an offshoot of Jewish apocalyptic literature cast in the poetic-aphoristic style of Expressionism, aimed extravagantly to weave the tenets of Marxism into a speculative cosmogony in the gnostic tradition. To Bloch, the Marxist call to overhaul society was a “concrete utopia”: a compelling expression of millennia-old messianic thought, which envisions the grand transformation, material as well as spiritual, as something to be not awaited but always attained. Utopia, be it Marxism or Anabaptism, is a finality that is present, yet still unrealized. Flamboyantly metaphysical *and* a lifelong Bolshevik, Bloch insisted that his monist cosmology supported communism, specifically Leninism, against reformist diversions. This, he argued in *The Principle of Hope* (1977), is because Marxism, apocalyptic in outlook, is committed above all to actuating its promise.

Jamie Owen Daniel, *Not Yet: Reconsidering Ernst Bloch* (Verso, 1997).

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