

The Paradox of Hope in Liquid Modernity: Social Transformations and the Value Space of Contemporary Europe

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This article examines Ernst Bloch's radical transformation of hope from its theological to its secular-utopian form through a distinctly socio-philosophical lens. Beginning with an analysis of how Augustinian-Thomistic hope functioned as an ideological mechanism that deferred justice to an otherworldly realm while stabilizing earthly hierarchies, the article traces the crisis of transcendent hope in modernity and identifies Martin Luther's dialectic of the hidden God (*deus absconditus*) as the crucial conceptual bridge to Bloch's philosophy. Bloch's ontology of the Not-Yet relocates hope within immanent, material processes, distinguishing between anticipatory "waking dreams" (*Tagträume*) that orient toward real possibilities and compensatory fantasies that defer transformation. The article explores Bloch's concept of concrete utopia – grounded in actual historical tendencies through *docta spes* (educated hope) – and its influence on liberation theology and social movements of the 1960s-70s. Critical examination reveals three fundamental challenges: the fragmentation of the revolutionary subject after 1989, the totalitarian dangers when utopian hope hardens into ideology, and the theodicy problem of sustaining hope without metaphysical guarantees. Contemporary analysis demonstrates how late capitalism colonizes futurity itself, yet new movements – from climate justice to solidarity economies—practice prefigurative politics that embody Blochian hope as democratic praxis. The article argues that Bloch is not simply overcoming but radically inheriting Christian eschatology's messianic structure, relocating it from transcendence to immanence, from divine grace to collective human agency, creating a hope adequate to our post-religious yet deeply utopian-needing age.

KEYWORDS

Hope,
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Concrete Utopia,
Secularization,
Social Transformation,
Prefigurative Politics,
Collective Agency,
Society

Introduction

Hope belongs to those human attitudes that resist unambiguous theoretical comprehension.

Compared with more widely discussed attitudes like belief and desire, the phenomenon of hope presents some unique challenges for both theories of the mind and theories of value. Hope is not only an attitude that has cognitive components – it is responsive to facts about the possibility and likelihood of future events. (*Blöser, Stahl, 2022*)

Hope moves within the tension between present reality and future possibility, between what is and what is not yet. This particular position makes it a central theme for both theological and philosophical reflection – but also, crucially, for socio-philosophical analysis. For hope is never merely an individual psychological state; it is socially organized, institutionally mediated, and politically consequential.

In the Christian tradition, hope, as one of the three theological virtues, forms the connecting link between faith and love. For Augustine and Thomas Aquinas, it is inseparably bound with fear and directed toward a transcendent goal: eternal beatitude, the vision of God, the Kingdom of God. This hope is grounded in divine grace and finds its

fulfillment beyond earthly existence. Yet from a sociological perspective, we must ask: What social order did these doctrines of hope stabilize? How did otherworldly promises function to pacify earthly revolts, to legitimate hierarchies, to defer justice to an unreachable beyond? The question is not only theological but political: What happens to hope when this transcendent reference point falls away? Can hope without God, without the guarantee of an eternal order, still be sustainable? And if so, what forms must it take?

Ernst Bloch, arguably the most consistent philosopher of hope in the twentieth century, answers this question with utmost determination.

Despite his atheism, something he espoused from the very beginning, Bloch stated explicitly the link between hope and religion (GA Erg. Bd.: 347)¹, and some theologians saw in his philosophy of hope a commitment to liberated version of Christianity that would accept the God as an immanent eschatological force (see especially Moltmann 1964 [1967], who puts eschatology at the center of theological discourse and defines its major object in essentially Blochian terms: to capture the future within the present) (see also Moylan 1997). (*Boldyrev, 2023*)

¹ *Translator's Note:* The abbreviation GA (*Gesamtausgabe*) refers to the 16-volume German edition of Ernst Bloch's collected works (published by Suhrkamp). The reference to the *Ergänzungsband* (Supplementary Volume) is cited by the author directly from I. Boldyrev's text (2023) and is not listed as a separate entry in this article's bibliography.

Bloch's philosophy of hope is not a simple negation of religious tradition but rather its radical transformation. The challenge is whether the utopian energy of religious hope can be preserved while redirecting it from heaven to earth, from eternity to historical time, from divine grace to human agency.

Bloch interprets faith in God as a hypostatized longing for a utopian form of existence. Once this hypostatization is recognized for what it is, the concept of 'God becomes the kingdom of God, and the kingdom of God no longer contains a god. God is recognized as embodying the hope for an ideal but thoroughly human kingdom. (*Stratton-Lake, n.d.*)

Research Methods

This article examines this transformation of hope from its theological to its secular-utopian form through a distinctly socio-philosophical lens. The investigation proceeds through several stages. First, we establish hope's socio-philosophical coordinates, examining how it mediates between structure and agency, how religious hope functioned historically as social control, and how modernity's secularization creates a legitimization crisis. Second, we trace a crucial intermediary figure: Martin Luther, whose dialectic of the hidden God (*deus absconditus*) disrupts the rational-theological synthesis of Aquinas and creates conceptual space for Bloch's radical reimagining. Third, we analyze Bloch's positive reconstruction: his ontology of the Not-Yet, his distinction between waking dreams and compensatory fantasies, and his theory of concrete utopia as grounded in real historical tendencies. Fourth, we examine the critical challenges that Blochian hope faces – the problem of the revolutionary subject, the dangers of totalitarianism, the absence of transcendent guarantees – and ask how contemporary social movements navigate these dilemmas.

Therefore, the article raises unavoidable questions that will guide our concluding reflections: Can collective hope sustain itself without metaphysical foundations? How can hope remain concrete rather than abstract, grounded rather than wishful, critical rather than complicit? These are not only philosophical puzzles but practical political challenges for any emancipatory project in our post-religious, post-utopian age – or rather, in an age that claims to be post-utopian while desperately needing new forms of transformative hope.

Results and Discussion

Hope between Structure and Agency. Hope occupies a peculiar position within the socio-philosophical theory. It is neither purely subjective – a private psychological disposition – nor entirely objective – a structural feature of social systems. Rather, hope functions as a mediating category that links individual consciousness to collective possibility, personal desire to social transformation. To understand Bloch's philosophical intervention, we must first grasp the sociological terrain upon which it operates: the tension between hope as a mechanism of social control and hope as a catalyst for social change.

The classical sociological critique of religion, articulated most forcefully by Marx, identifies hope – particularly religious hope as a drug. In his famous formulation from the "Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Rechtsphilosophie," Marx writes:

Religious suffering is, at one and the same time, the expression of real suffering and a protest against real suffering. Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, and the soul of soulless conditions. It is the opium of the people. (*Marx, 1956: 378*)

So, hope can be an opium. The "sigh of the oppressed creature" contains both resignation and resistance, both consolation and critique. But can hope function as pacification, and under what conditions does it become a motor of transformation?

Max Weber wrote:

The religious emphasis on restless, continuous, systematic vocational work as the highest form of ascetic practice and simultaneously the surest and most visible evidence of genuine rebirth and faith must have been the most powerful imaginable driving force for the expansion of that conception of life which we call the 'spirit of capitalism. (*Weber, 2016: 78*)

Hope for otherworldly salvation produces systematic rationalization of this-worldly conduct. The paradox is striking: orientation toward the eternal generates the most rigorous temporal discipline; longing for transcendent grace motivates immanent achievement; hope for a world beyond leads to mastery of the world at hand.

Yet Weber also recognizes that this mechanism eventually exhausts itself, that the religious foundations erode while the disciplinary structures remain.

Capitalist economy today no longer requires this prop [religious asceticism], since it rests on a mechanical foundation. Even the rosy mood of its laughing heir, the Enlightenment, seems to be definitively fading, and the notion of 'duty in one's calling' roams through our life as a ghost of once-religious belief contents.. (*Weber, 2016: 82*)

Capitalist economy no longer needs its religious support; it operates on its "mechanical" foundations. The idea of vocational duty haunts modern life as a ghost of formerly religious content. Hope has been secularized. This suggests a crucial socio-philosophical insight: hope can outlive its original content, can be transferred from one object to another, can be instrumentalized for purposes quite different from those its bearers consciously intend.

Émile Durkheim's *Die elementaren Formen des religiösen Lebens* approaches this question from a different angle, identifying religion's primary function not in its cognitive content (beliefs about God or the afterlife) but in its capacity to generate social solidarity and collective effervescence. Hope becomes functional: it serves to integrate individuals into larger wholes, to subordinate private interests to collective purposes, to maintain social order across time. Similar Ernst Troeltsch. In *Die Soziallehren der christlichen Kirchen und Gruppen* he refines this analysis by distinguishing between different organizational forms of religious life – church, sect, and mysticism – each of which embodies a different relationship between religious hope and social structure. His typology reveals that religious hope is not monolithic; its social effects depend on institutional mediation, on how religious communities organize themselves and position themselves relative to worldly power. What emerges from this socio-philosophical mapping is a double recognition? First, hope is never merely individual or psychological: it is always also social. Second, hope's relationship to social structure is fundamentally ambivalent: it can stabilize existing orders or it can destabilize them by insisting on the gaps.

This ambivalence sets the stage for understanding Bloch's intervention. He kind of asked: Can hope be retained as a motor of social transformation once its transcendent guarantor has been removed? To examine this thought, we must turn to the specific theological formations. For instance, such famous ones as Augustine and Thomas Aquinas.

Augustine and Aquinas from a socio-philosophical Perspective. To understand Bloch's radical transformation

of hope, we must first examine the theological edifice he seeks to dismantle. Augustine and Thomas Aquinas articulate doctrines of hope. They defer justice to an otherworldly realm and institutionalize hope itself as a commodity administered by ecclesiastical authority. A socio-philosophical reading could be: It's a specific formation that stabilizes configurations of power.

Augustine's doctrine of the two cities provides the foundational framework. "Accordingly, two cities have been formed by two loves: the earthly by the love of self, even to the contempt of God; the heavenly by the love of God, even to the contempt of self." (Augustine, 1950: XIV, 28) This binary structure performs several ideological functions simultaneously. First, it establishes a radical devaluation of earthly existence: the *civitas terrena*. Second, it redirects human longing away from worldly improvement toward otherworldly salvation: the *civitas Dei*. Third, it creates a permanent division within the human community between the elect and the damned.

The political implications become explicit in Augustine's treatment of slavery and domination in Book XIX, Chapter 15 of *De Civitate Dei*. Here Augustine argues that slavery originates in sin and persists by divine judgment. If one's subordinate position is decreed by God as punishment for sin, rebellion becomes not merely politically futile but spiritually damnable. Here, hope has a deferral mechanism. The restless heart (*inquietum est cor nostrum*) that might fuel social revolt is instead channeled toward longing for God.

Thomas Aquinas systematizes and rationalizes this Augustinian inheritance, giving it the form of a comprehensive theological science. His treatment of hope in the *Summa Theologica* renders explicit what remains more implicit in Augustine: hope is a theological virtue, which means it is (a) infused by divine grace rather than cultivated by human effort, (b) oriented exclusively toward a supernatural end, and (c) mediated by ecclesiastical institutions. "Hope is a theological virtue by which we trust confidently that we will obtain eternal happiness through the divine assistance." (*Aquinas, 1947: II-II, Q. 17, A. 1*) This definition performs crucial ideological work.

The object of hope is carefully delimited: it must be future, difficult, and possible to obtain through divine help. But this "divine help" is not immediately available to the individual; it comes through the sacramental system, through participation in the Church's liturgical and institutional life. Hope thus becomes something the Church administers, distributes, regulates.

Thomas's discussion of fear in the *Summa Theologica* (1947: II-II, Q. 19, A. 4) reveals with particular clarity the psychological mechanisms through which this control operates. Here Thomas distinguishes between servile fear (*timor servilis*) – fear of punishment – and filial fear (*timor filialis*) – fear of offending God out of love. Significantly, he argues these are not two different habits but the same habit in imperfect and perfect form. The sociological function of this theological architecture becomes unmistakable when we consider its institutional embedding. The Church positions itself as the sole legitimate administrator of both fear and hope.

From a critical socio-philosophical perspective, then, the Augustinian-Thomistic doctrine of hope functions as an ideology in the precise Marxian sense: it represents real human needs and desires (the longing for justice, for wholeness, for fulfillment) in inverted form, directing these energies away from their actual objects (transformation of

oppressive social relations) toward imaginary satisfactions (otherworldly compensation).

This is the ideological formation that Bloch inherits and must confront. His challenge is not simply to reject this theology, with simple atheism, but to salvage what is genuine within it: the refusal to accept present reality as final, the insistence that something is missing, the conviction that fulfillment lies ahead rather than behind.

The Crisis of Transcendent Hope in Modernity. The Augustinian-Thomistic architecture of hope, stable for more than a millennium, begins to fracture in modernity. The crisis is not merely theological, but structural, affecting the very mechanisms through which collective hope is organized, transmitted, and sustained. What Weber diagnoses as the "disenchantment of the world" (*Entzauberung der Welt*) represents not simply the decline of religious belief but the collapse of an entire mode of organizing human expectations and grounding social order.

In his famous lecture "Science as a profession" (1919), Weber articulates the fundamental transformation:

Growing intellectualization and rationalization therefore do not indicate a growing general understanding of the conditions under which we live. It means something different: the knowledge or belief that, if we only wished to know, we could find out at any time; that, in principle, there are no mysterious, incalculable powers at work, but rather that all things can, in principle, be mastered through calculation. But this means: the disenchantment of the world. (*Weber, 1992: 19*)

The increasing intellectualization and rationalization of modern life does not mean we actually know more about our conditions of existence, but rather that we believe, rightly or wrongly, that everything could be known, calculated, mastered. This disenchantment strikes at the heart of transcendent hope.

Nietzsche captures the existential dimension of this crisis with his proclamation of God's death. In *The Gay Science*, he introduces the character of the Madman (§125), who announces:

God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him! How do we console ourselves, the murderers of all murderers? [...] Must we not ourselves become gods, simply to appear worthy of it?" How do we console ourselves, we murderers of all murderers? Must we not ourselves become gods to be worthy of the deed? (*Nietzsche, 1994: §125*).

Nietzsche recognizes that God's death is not a liberation but a crisis. Peter Berger, writing from a sociological perspective in *The Sacred Canopy* (1967), analyzes the structural consequences of this collapse:

The sacred cosmos, which transcended and included man in its ordering of reality, has collapsed. The world has become disenchanted. Man is no longer to be contained in a sacred cosmos. Instead, he is called upon to construct a world of his own. (*Berger, 1967: 28*)

This represents a massive transfer of responsibility. How can hope sustain itself when it knows itself to be merely human projection rather than response to divine promise?

Reinhart Koselleck, in his magisterial *Vergangene Zukunft* (1979), traces the transformation of temporal consciousness that accompanies this crisis. The future becomes an extension of present trends, a projection of current trajectories, rather than a genuinely new irruption that could transform everything. Hope loses its eschatological urgency and becomes developmental optimism; the Kingdom of God becomes the progressive improvement of social conditions.

The result is a modern crisis in the structure of collective hope. The traditional mechanisms, like religious institutions, have lost their credibility. But what replaces them? This is the situation Bloch confronts: a modernity that has killed God but not yet learned to live without transcendent guarantees.

Luther: The Hidden God and Desperate Hope. Between the rational optimism of Thomas Aquinas and the radical immanentism of Ernst Bloch stands a crucial mediating figure: Martin Luther. Luther's theology represents a decisive rupture within the Christian tradition itself. At the heart of this rupture lies Luther's doctrine of the hidden God – the *deus absconditus* – which fundamentally destabilizes the Thomistic confidence in reason's ability to grasp divine purposes and unsettles the neat coordination of faith, hope, and charity within a rationally comprehensible cosmic order. As Avendaño Manzanares writes:

In the doctrine of the *Deus absconditus* - the hidden or concealed God - we find one of the most profound passages of Luther's theology, and, at the same time (along with the doctrine *De servo arbitrio*) with one of the fundamental keys for the correct understanding of the treatise on the theology of the cross. (*Avendaño Manzanares, 2018: 107*).

This is not a minor theological adjustment but a fundamental reorientation. For Thomas, hope was reasonable because it rested on knowable divine promises. Luther shatters this synthesis. God withdraws from rational comprehension; He becomes dark, paradoxical, even seemingly contradictory.

It is concretely within the framework of this dialectical and paradoxical thought used by the Reformer, that a fundamental idea is incorporated not only for the understanding of *Deus absconditus* in The Heidelberg Disputation, but likewise for the whole treatise on the theology of the cross, that is to say; the concept of the *sub contrario*: The works of God are neither attractive nor much less self-evident to the human being, but quite the opposite. They appear before this one as deformed and despised. Yet God always works, as has already been said, *sub contrario*, that is, under his opposite forms. (*Avendaño Manzanares, 2018: 116*)

God works under opposites – this is the principle of *sub contrario*. God's power appears as weakness (the crucified Christ), His wisdom as foolishness (the scandal of the cross), His presence as absence.

The biblical foundation for this doctrine appears starkly in Isaiah, in 45:15: "Truly, thou art a God who hidest thyself." Luther's God withdraws, hope must be faith alone—*sola fide* – a desperate clinging to divine promise against all appearances, against all reason, often against hope itself. Yet within this crisis lies a strange opening. If God is hidden, if the divine remains fundamentally mysterious and ungraspable, then there is also something hidden in humanity – created, after all, in God's image. The logic is inexorable: if *deus absconditus*, then perhaps also *homo absconditus*. For Bloch, there is no such eschatological resolution, no divine fidelity underwriting human hope. Yet Bloch will argue that only such hope, freed from metaphysical guarantees, can be genuine hope. A hope that participates in rather than passively receives its own fulfillment.

Bloch's Appropriation of the Lutheran Dialectic. Bloch's relationship to Luther is neither simple rejection nor straightforward continuation but rather a radical appropriation. What Bloch recognizes in Luther's doctrine of the *deus absconditus* is not merely a theological puzzle about divine inscrutability but a structural insight that can be liberated and redeployed for emancipatory purposes. Just as Luther's God cannot be captured in rational-theological

systems, cannot be possessed or mastered through human categories, so too the human being resists final definition, refuses to be enclosed within any supposedly complete anthropology. Both cases involve a fundamental not-yet-revealed. For Bloch, the hiddenness of the human points to immanence. Bloch relocates in the open process of material becoming, in history's unfinished character, in humanity's unrealized capacities. This becomes clear when we examine Bloch's analysis of religion itself. Helpful is here the introduction written by Thompson:

Religion is essentially playing this game with people, he says, telling them that there is a promised land to which they can only return through obedience. What Bloch seeks to achieve with this book is to break out of this circularity by seeking out the materialist, worldly base of a metaphysical religion, to find the things in religion which actually unbind rather than rebind us. (*Bloch, 2009, XIV Introduction*)

Religion – word itself suggests re-ligare, to bind again, to tie back. Institutional religion binds people through obedience, Bloch detects counter-currents, subversive elements, utopian surpluses that point beyond religion's own conservative functions.

What Bloch wants to use religious myths for, however, is to search for a historical world which can be liberated from its own limitations, using its own stories and myths, and which will allow us to pass out of passive and anamnestic circularity into active potentiality. (*Bloch, 2009: XIV Introduction*)

This is the critical move. Religious myths are not simply dismissed as ideology or false consciousness. But they must be transformed from passive remembrance (*anamnesis*) to active potentiality, from looking backward to a lost paradise to looking forward to an unrealized future. The Exodus narrative, for instance, is not about return to Eden but about flight toward the promised land.

All of these are questions which Ernst Bloch set himself in a lifelong mission to understand the surpluses of human existence, those bits left over when all reasonable explanation fails. He wanted to know what the sigh of the oppressed creature sounded like and whether, within it, there was a louder cry not only of desperation but of liberation, of Exodus and of the Faustian search for the fulfilled moment, to be found only in the fulfilled utopian society. For Bloch, the dogmatic rejection of the sigh as mere false consciousness was also a rejection of the possibility of liberating humanity from the realm of necessity and to the realm of freedom. (*Bloch, 2009: XVI Introduction*)

Here we see Bloch's fundamental disagreement with orthodox Marxism's dismissal of religion as simple opiate. The task is not to dismiss but to decode, not to abandon but to transform.

The biblical text that captures this most powerfully for Bloch is God's self-declaration in the 2. Buch Mose (Exodus), Kapitel 3, Vers 14: "I will be what I will be." Not "I am what I am". A statement of fixed essence, eternal presence, complete actuality. But "I will be". Futurity, becoming, process. This is Bloch's appropriation of Lutheran dialectic: he takes the structure of hiddenness, paradox, and radical futurity, but relocates it entirely within immanent, material, historical process.

Hope as a principle of ontology. Bloch's philosophical radicality lies not merely in his thematic focus on hope but in his insistence that hope is not simply a psychological state or ethical disposition, it is grounded in the very structure of reality itself. To understand this claim, we must enter into what is perhaps the most difficult and controversial aspect of his thought: the ontology of the Not-Yet (*Noch-Nicht*).

Bloch's ontology of not-yet being is a strong theory of futurity. By this I mean that tendency at the ontological level is not conceived as following a predetermined course, as for example in Aristotle's notion of entelecheia, but that there is crucially space for a creative dimension to tendency. While the ontology of not-yet being conceptualizes goaldirectedness, it is not a teleology in the classical sense of the word. The goal of process is created in its unfolding, while at the same time there is a goaldirectedness which is more than merely formal. We can easily see that this creates a tension in the theory and places it uncomfortably between deterministic ontology (including the determinism of final causality) and radical indeterminism. Yet Bloch insists that both of these alternatives state too much and hence say too little. (*Siebers, 2021: 3*).

Bloch refuses both the comfort of a predetermined telos (as in Aristotelian metaphysics or Thomistic providence) and the vertigo of pure contingency (as in certain existentialist or postmodern accounts). The world is neither unfolding according to a script already written nor stumbling blindly through meaningless accident. Rather, it is directed without being determined; it has tendency without having fate.

The ontology of the not-yet is an attempt to articulate the 'unfinishedness' of the world in terms of a radical openness towards novelty. The silent core of existence, which has not yet been brought out, is the site of indeterminacy, openness, what might be but might also never come to pass, the inarticulate core within more articulate or definite desires and aims. Something is missing. This aspect is central to the way Bloch understands the utopian, as we have seen, and it is a fundamental feature of the real as such. (*Siebers, 2019: 19*)

Siebers argues the phrase "something is missing" (etwas fehlt) runs like a leitmotif through Bloch's work. It names the ontological incompleteness that drives all process, all striving, all hope.

Crucially, this ontology refuses any dualism between matter and spirit, between a passive substrate and an active form imposed from above.

The ontology of the not-yet is, thus, a self-avowed materialism. It does not recognize a separate, transcendent realm of the world that provides logical structure, mind, or form to a substrate that is somehow in-formed by it. There is certainly an aspect of neutral monism, as much as an aspect of panpsychism here, but the crucial aspect of Bloch's conception of matter is its dynamic process and immanent form – and not 'Klotzmaterie,' lump matter. The goal of process is not given in advance, but has to be created first by the process itself. (*Siebers, 2019: 23*)

Bloch's materialism is not the mechanical materialism of the eighteenth century, nor the reductive materialism of vulgar Marxism. What makes this philosophy distinctively a philosophy of hope rather than merely a metaphysics of process?

The real advance that Bloch's philosophy makes possible is to move beyond this stalemate in a genuine ontology of not-yet-being, in other words of real novelty that is grounded in the – cognitive, affective, and active – attitude of hope. With the word attitude I try to capture a dimension that transcends and retains the distinction between affect and virtue. (*Siebers, 2019: 27*)

Hope is not simply a feeling we have about an independently existing future; nor is it merely a virtue we cultivate. It is an "attitude" in a richer sense. For Augustine, matter is the realm of change, decay, and unreliability; hope must transcend it toward the eternal. For Bloch, matter is the realm of emergence, creativity, and real futurity; hope is grounded precisely in matter's own self-transcending movement. The question that remains is whether this

earthly hope can sustain itself without collapsing either into naive progressivism or tragic disappointment.

Daydream vs. Nightdream. At the heart of Bloch's philosophy of hope lies a crucial distinction, one that separates his project fundamentally from psychoanalytic approaches to dreaming and desire. While Freud had explored the nocturnal dream (Nachtraum) as a royal road to the unconscious, a realm of repressed wishes, compensatory fantasies, and backward-looking fulfillments, Bloch insists on the primacy of a different kind of dream altogether: the waking dream, or Tagtraum in German. "But the daydream, as Bloch's emphatic interjection has it, is not a preliminary stage of the night dream. A specific evaluation must take place here." (*Zimmermann, 2016: 57*)

This is not merely a typological difference but a philosophical reorientation. The daydream is not preparatory to nocturnal dreaming, nor is it a diluted or inferior version of it. Rather, it requires its own specific evaluation, its own psychology, and ultimately its own ontology. There are four characteristics which mark out the terrain of what Bloch calls a "psychology of the new".

First characteristic of the daydream: free rein. The relationship between the daydream and the dreamer changes in contrast to the Freudian conception. The daydream does not weigh upon the dreamer. It stands within his power. Second characteristic of the daydream. The ego is less weakened in the daydream. There is a connection to life and to its truth. (*Zimmermann, 2016: 57*)

We see the decisive break with Freud. In nocturnal dreams, the dreamer is passive, overwhelmed by unconscious forces that press upon the ego from below. The dream "presses" on the dreamer.

Third characteristic of the daydream: the improvement of the world. When the self is not introverted or drawn only toward its immediate surroundings, it can also represent other people. Fourth characteristic of the daydream: The journey to the end. The daydream is a shapeable possibility, and great works of art are laid upon a latent layer of what is to come – that is, upon the contents of a future. (*Zimmermann, 2016: 58*)

The third and fourth characteristics reveal the ethical and aesthetic dimensions of the daydream. Unlike the introverted night dream, which circles endlessly around the dreamer's past traumas and narcissistic wounds, the daydream can represent other people, it opens outward toward world-improvement (Weltverbesserung). It is social, not solitary; constructive, not merely compensatory. And crucially, it travels to the end. The daydream does not merely replay the past in disguised form; it anticipates and prefigures what does not yet exist.

Hope has its roots in the everyday practice of anticipatory consciousness.

In this sense, true hope must, in fact, still be learned. This aspired learning process, however, must constantly remain in dialogue with everyday small daydreams, for ultimately it is an almost detective-like search employing a philosophical methodology. (*Zimmermann, 2016: 48*)

Genuine hope must still be learned. The learning process must remain in constant dialogue with the small daydreams, for ultimately it is a matter of an almost detective-like search with a philosophical methodology. Hope is not given but achieved; it requires cultivation, discernment, education.

The contrast with Augustine and Thomas could hardly be sharper. For the theological tradition, hope is a theological virtue infused by grace, oriented toward an already-determined end guaranteed by divine providence. For Bloch,

hope is a natural human capacity that must be educated through attention to the world's own forward movement.

Concrete Utopia and Collective Practice: The Socio-philosophical Dimension of Hope. Bloch's philosophy of hope is not a meditation on private psychological states but a theory of collective historical action. The Not-Yet-Being that he identifies ontologically is rather a social-ontological category. Hope, properly understood, is not what isolated individuals feel but what communities enact; utopia is not individual fantasy but collective project. The key distinction that organizes Bloch's social theory of hope is between abstract and concrete utopia. Abstract utopia is wishful thinking detached from real historical possibilities. Concrete utopia, by contrast, remains tied to real historical process, to the actual movement of material and social forces. Concrete utopia reads the future that is gestating within the present, the tendencies that are already underway but not yet fully realized. Inge Münz-Koenen's *Konstruktion des Nirgendwo* (1997) provides a crucial analysis of how Bloch constructs this "nowhere" that is simultaneously grounded in material reality. Münz-Koenen demonstrates that Bloch's utopian thinking is fundamentally discursive – it operates through reading existing cultural forms (fairy tales, music, architecture, political movements) for their utopian surplus, for what they express beyond their manifest content. This methodology, what Bloch calls *docta spes*, educated or informed hope, requires disciplined attention to material conditions. This diagnostic work is inherently collective. The question of collectivity raises a deeper issue about the very constitution of social reality. Cornelius Castoriadis's *The Imaginary Institution of Society* (1975) provides a theoretical framework that complements and challenges Bloch's position. Castoriadis argues that societies are fundamentally constituted through the "social imaginary", the shared meanings, values, and institutions that are not simply given by material conditions but created through collective imagination.

Bloch and Castoriadis converge on a crucial point: hope is not response to already-existing possibilities but participation in their creation. Yet they diverge on the question of determination. Bloch, remaining within the Marxist tradition, insists on locating utopian potential in matter's own tendencies, in objective historical processes. The social efficacy of Blochian hope becomes visible in its historical reception, particularly in the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s. Liberation theology, emerging primarily in Latin America, directly appropriated Bloch's language and categories. Jürgen Moltmann, who published *Theologie der Hoffnung*, wrote about Bloch and follows him in this sense: "Denn Blochs Philosophie war eingetaucht in „das eschatologische Gewissen, das durch die Bibel in die Welt kam“, wie er selbst bekannte." (Moltmann, 2017: 11) Christian hope is eschatological, it aims not merely at gradual improvement but at qualitatively new, end-time future. Beyond theological appropriation, Blochian categories animated also the New Left, feminist movements, and anticolonial struggles. Anticolonial movements drew on indigenous and non-Western traditions to imagine futures that were not merely catching up with Western modernity but creating alternative modernities altogether.

Bloch's concept of *Heimat*, German for homeland, crystallizes this understanding of utopia as both destination and present task. The famous final words of *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* describe *Heimat* as "die allen in der Kindheit scheint und worin noch niemand war" – the homeland that shines for everyone in childhood and where no one has yet been. This is not nostalgia for a lost past (that would be

abstract utopia, compensatory fantasy) but anticipation of an achieved wholeness, a reconciliation between humanity and world, self and other, that has never yet existed but toward which history strives. Terry Eagleton's *Hope without Optimism* (2015) offers a critical contemporary reading of Bloch that sharpens these insights while interrogating their limits. Eagleton distinguishes hope from optimism: optimism is the expectation that things will improve, a prediction based on trend analysis or faith in progress. Hope, by contrast, is a commitment maintained even when optimism is impossible. This raises the fundamental problem that haunts concrete utopia: How do we distinguish real possibilities from wishful thinking? How do we know which tendencies in the present actually point toward emancipation rather than toward new forms of domination? Bloch's answer – *docta spes*, educated hope that studies actual historical movements – is methodologically sophisticated but politically underdetermined. Hope cannot rely on historical guarantees, neither divine providence nor dialectical necessity, but must continually test itself against emerging realities, must distinguish between what genuinely expands human capacities and what merely reproduces domination in new forms. Bloch provides the ontological and phenomenological groundwork for such hope, but its realization demands institutions and practices that he himself only partially theorized.

Hope and Social Transformation: Critical Perspectives. Ernst Bloch's philosophy of hope, for all its ontological sophistication and phenomenological richness, rests on a wager that history has called into severe question: the belief that there exists a collective subject capable of carrying utopian hope into realization. The collapse of actually existing socialism in 1989 shattered this assumption not merely politically but conceptually. What remains when the revolutionary subject fragments into multiple, often competing movements like ecological, feminist, antiracist or postcolonial, each with its own diagnoses and demands? The pluralization of hope's carriers is potentially democratizing, yet it raises urgent questions about coordination, solidarity, and the possibility of systemic transformation when no single agent claims universal significance. Bloch's hope was always collective, but he envisioned a unified collectivity, but contemporary reality presents us with radical plurality. The twentieth century's catastrophic experiments in forcing utopia into being through state power cast a darker shadow over Bloch's project. Hannah Arendt's analysis remains devastating. In her book *The Origins of Totalitarianism* she wrote in the chapter *Ideology and Terror* her famous sentence: "Ideologies are never interested in the miracle of being" (Arendt, 1973: 469). When hope becomes ideology – when the Not-Yet hardens into a predetermined program that admits no deviation – it produces not liberation but terror.

These problems converge in what we might call the secular theodicy dilemma: how does hope justify itself when confronted with massive, unredeemed suffering and no guarantee of ultimate justice? What prevents tragic hope from exhausting itself into cynicism or despair? These questions become especially urgent when we turn to the present, to a late capitalist modernity that seems to have colonized futurity itself, leaving us unable to imagine alternatives even as existing arrangements produce escalating crises.

Hope in Contemporary Society. The temporal structure of late capitalism produces what Fredric Jameson identifies as a profound failure of imagination:

Someone once said that it is easier to imagine the end of the world than to imagine the end of capitalism. We can now revise that and witness the attempt to imagine capitalism by way of imagining the end of the world. (Jameson, 2003: 76)

This diagnosis captures a double bind: on one hand, neoliberal rationality has so thoroughly colonized futurity that genuine alternatives appear not merely difficult but literally unthinkable. Capitalism presents itself as coextensive with reality itself and if the present appears as an eternal now, if history has ended and alternatives have been foreclosed, then concrete utopia becomes impossible. Hope devolves into either abstract fantasy or cynical resignation. The question becomes urgent: can Blochian categories of anticipatory consciousness and the Not-Yet retain critical purchase under conditions designed precisely to foreclose futurity?

Rebecca Solnit's *Hope in the Dark* provides a crucial counter-narrative to capitalist realism's fatalism. Solnit argues that despair rests on a mistaken assumption: that we can predict outcomes, that history moves in straight lines, that present power configurations determine future possibilities. This resonates deeply with Bloch's insistence that hope must be learned, must attend to emergent possibilities rather than extrapolating from present trends. Solnit's work chronicles contemporary movements: climate justice organizing, mutual aid networks, indigenous resistance, feminist and antiracist struggles. These movements develop forms of collective decision-making, resource-sharing, and solidarity that model the world they seek to create, understanding that the means cannot be separated from the ends, that hope is not passive waiting but active making.

The challenge these movements face is precisely the one Bloch identified: distinguishing concrete from abstract utopia, reading real possibilities rather than projecting arbitrary desires. Anna L. Tsing wrote in 2015 about matsutake mushrooms and offers a methodological approach to *docta spes* under conditions of systemic precarity. She studied those mushrooms that grow in disturbed forests, thriving precisely in damaged ecosystems, and uses this as a lens for understanding how life persists and even flourishes in capitalism's ruins. Her crucial move is to reject both progressive narratives (that assume linear improvement) and apocalyptic ones (that see only total collapse), instead attending to the "arts of living on a damaged planet". Her approach is improvised, collaborative, often unplanned. Humans and non-humans create livable worlds amid catastrophes. This represents *docta spes* for our moment: hope that is neither naive nor despairing, that studies actual practices of survival and flourishing rather than projecting ideal futures, that recognizes indeterminacy as opportunity rather than threat. Her work learns from the twentieth century's catastrophes without abandoning commitment to transformation and insists that even in capitalism's ruins, other worlds remain genuinely possible.

Conclusion

This article has traced a trajectory from Augustine's transcendent hope through Luther's dark paradox to Bloch's radical immanence and finally to our contemporary predicament. The central question that structured this investigation: Can hope sustain itself without metaphysical guarantees? Well, it admits no simple answer. Yet the in-

quiry itself reveals a more complex truth: Bloch's philosophy represents neither a simple secularization of Christian hope nor its complete rejection, but rather its dialectical transformation.

The crisis of modernity, as articulated by Weber, Nietzsche, and Berger, shattered the transcendent architecture that had organized collective hope for millennia, leaving behind a fundamental transformation in temporal consciousness: from eschatological rupture to developmental progress, from divine intervention to human planning. Luther's theology of the hidden God emerged as the crucial hinge between these worlds. The *deus absconditus* and *homo absconditus* created conceptual space for Bloch's anthropological turn. Hope is neither neurotic symptom nor false consciousness but an ontological category embedded in existence itself. The fragmentation of the revolutionary subject, the totalitarian perversion of utopian energies, and the absence of transcendent critique all pose genuine challenges to immanent hope. The question with which we began: Can hope sustain itself without metaphysical guarantees? It might require reformulation. The issue is not whether hope can persist (clearly it does) but what forms it must take, what resources it requires, what dangers it faces. Bloch's enduring contribution is recognizing that hope is neither transcendent gift nor material inevitability but a human practice.

What contemporary movements teach us is that hope requires institutions and not the ecclesiastical machinery that Augustine and Thomas theorized, but democratic structures capable of sustaining commitment across generations, learning from failures without abandoning struggle, maintaining critical distance without retreating into cynicism. Hope needs what Bloch called the "warm stream" of utopian desire, but also the "cold stream" of sober analysis. The homeland where no one has yet been remains unreached, perhaps unreachable. Yet the movement toward it, the refusal to accept homelessness as fate, might constitute a hope adequate to our historical "Daydream".

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Парадокс надії в плинній сучасності: соціальні трансформації та ціннісний простір сучасної Європи

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У статті розглядається радикальна трансформація концепту надії Ернстом Блохом від його теологічної до секулярно-утопічної форми крізь виразну соціально-філософську призму. Розпочинаючи з аналізу ідеології надії в августино-томістській інтерпретації (відкладання справедливості у потойбічний світ з одночасною стабілізацією земної ієрархії), автор простежує кризу трансцендентної надії в епоху модерну. Виявлено, що діалектика «прихованого Бога» (*deus absconditus*) Мартіна Лютера стала вирішальним концептуальним містком до філософії Е. Блоха. З'ясовано, що блохівська онтологія «Ще-Не» переміщує надію в іманентні, матеріальні процеси, розмежовуючи випереджальні «мрії наяву» (*Tagträume*), орієнтовані на реальні можливості, та компенсаторні фантазії, що відтермінують трансформацію. У статті досліджується концепція «конкретної утопії» Блоха, що ґрунтується на реальних історичних тенденціях через *dosta spes* (освічену надію), та її вплив на теологію визволення та соціальні рухи 1960–70-х років. Критичний аналіз дозволив автору обґрунтувати три фундаментальні виклики для сучасного суспільства: фрагментацію революційного суб'єкта після 1989 року, тоталітарні загрози при перетворенні утопічної надії на жорстку ідеологію та проблему теодицеї — підтримання надії без метафізичних гарантій. Показано, що сучасна концептуалізація надії демонструє, як пізній капіталізм колонізує саме майбутнє, проте нові рухи — від кліматичної справедливості до економіки солідарності — практикують префігуративну політику, що втілює блохівську надію як демократичний праксис. У висновках стверджується, що Блох не просто долає, а радикально успадковує месіанську структуру християнської есхатології, переносючи її з трансцендентності в іманентність, від божественної благодаті до колективної людської суб'єктності, створюючи надію, адекватну нашій пострелігійній, але глибоко затребуваній в утопії епосі.

Ключові слова: надія, Ернст Блох, конкретна утопія, секуляризація, соціальна трансформація, префігуративна політика, колективна суб'єктність, суспільство

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