Essays on the philosophy of music

This volume contains a selection of essays in translation by the German philosopher and man of letters Ernst Bloch (1885–1977), on the philosophy of music. For Bloch — often simply assimilated to the Marxist tradition, but whose thought shows a strongly individual and idealist cast — music was a primary focus of reflection. His musical knowledge and expertise were of a very high order and he was well acquainted with many of the leading composers and theorists of music of his time in Germany: even divorced from his philosophy his criticism remains of value and significance.

The first essay in this volume is drawn from Bloch’s major early work Geist der Utopie, where it occupies a central place in the opening section. This substantial piece shows a spectacular synthesis of music history, music theory and philosophy: beginning with a historical account of the western musical tradition containing many original insights, it moves on to theoretical speculations which include a discussion of harmony and rhythm and culminates in a philosophical view that places music, as a human function and aspiration, at the heart of Bloch’s general philosophy. Other essays in the volume include a discussion of the relation of music and mathematics, concluding with a contrast between the fugue and the sonata; a short history of attitudes to instruments and their significance, leading to a discussion of the human voice; and a novel and profound consideration of aspects of Wagner’s dramatic and musical achievement — in many ways the focal point of Bloch’s thought about music. The final piece is derived from Das Prinzip Hoffnung, and there Bloch traces music’s emergence from a primordial longing — portrayed in the legend of Pan and Syrinx — and ends by characterising great music as embodying a supreme moral force, being charged with symbols of man’s expectancy, or hope.

Throughout, whether discussing the complex and varied relations between text and music, or questions relating to the ‘expressive’ as opposed to the ‘descriptive’ functions of music, Bloch is intent on elucidating and placing musical experience.

David Drew’s important introduction marks the centenary of Bloch’s birth. It traces Bloch’s career, discussing his very individual position in particular in post-war Germany, and concludes with an illuminating study of the crucial relationship between Bloch and his younger contemporary Theodor W. Adorno.
Essays on the philosophy of music

Ernst Bloch
translated by Peter Palmer
with an introduction by David Drew
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Along with a dozen further pieces, the following essays were first assembled in German in an anthology titled Zur Philosophie der Musik. The opening essay constitutes a large extract from the revised version of Ernst Bloch’s first book, Geist der Utopie. (As my Notes will indicate, in subsequent writings he sometimes quotes from the original, 1918, edition.) An Expressionist work in various respects, Geist der Utopie owes important stimuli to Georg Lukács – whose early Marxism included a mystical strain which found a ready response in Bloch. There was some talk between them of a joint book on aesthetics. Bloch, whose formal studies at university had embraced philosophy, music and physics, was to contribute a survey of music. In the event, such a survey occupies a central place in the first part of Geist der Utopie. Reconsidering this book when it entered his Complete Edition (as volume 3) in 1964, Bloch himself summed it up as a venture in ‘revolutionary gnosis’. Its messianic reading of history, and its conception of music as potentially the prophetic art par excellence, are ultimately re-echoed by the final essay on music in the German and the present selection.

The final essay comes from Das Prinzip Hoffnung, originally titled ‘Träume vom besseren Leben’ (Dreams of the Better Life). Bloch wrote this in the United States, soon after he had emigrated there in 1938. Formally, stylistically, Das Prinzip Hoffnung yields nothing in brilliance to his earliest book. George Steiner, a critic rather better acquainted with world literature than Jean Paul’s impeccuous Wuz the Schoolmaster, assures us that there is no other work like it. ‘There is’, Steiner comments, ‘no ready designation for its shape and tone, for its fantastic range and metaphoric logic.’ Compared to Bloch’s first book, Das Prinzip Hoffnung implies a delicate shift in focus: broadly speaking, from the religious self and its preoccupations to Man as a social being. In the interim, Bloch had equipped himself to demonstrate that – as one of his distinguished
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musician-admirers has put it – 'in a purely scientific sense hope resides in us' (Leonard Bernstein, Findings).

In contrast to the first and last essays, the other three in the present selection are inherently self-contained. The second and third essays appear in volume 9 of the Complete Edition (Literarische Aufsätze, 1965). The fourth appears within volume 10 (Philosophische Aufsätze zur objektiven Phantasie, 1969). Despite Bloch’s emphasis on the role of individuality in musical creation, ‘Paradoxes and the Pastorale in Wagner’s Music’ furnishes the only extended study in the German anthology of a single composer. Wagner’s problematic genius was one with which Bloch repeatedly came to grips, as in Geist der Utopie and in his critique of cultural trends in the 1920s, Erbschaft dieser Zeit.

Two slips of Bloch’s pen have been emended in the English texts. Beethoven’s Seventh Symphony, as opposed to his Eighth, is evidently meant on p. 48; and the Nile music ‘vor dem vierten Akt’ of Aida was Verdi’s cue for Act 3 (p. 177). In the Notes at the end, some specific allusions and references are briefly elucidated. It was difficult to gauge the amount of material that the reader might welcome – I have simply tried to be helpful, without becoming tedious. As for the task of translation, there are well-known syntactical and psychological differences between German and English. When the original prose has the prevailing density of Ernst Bloch’s, it makes the attempt to reconcile those differences all the more arduous. Since a good many passages defy ‘naturalisation’, my version will no doubt present a certain impoverishment. I can but hope that it still speaks effectively for its remarkable author, to the profit of anyone for whom ideas and music are vital, intimate concerns.

*      *      *

My thanks are due in the first instance to Robert Pascall, who selected most of the Essays for translation. He suggested many improvements to a draft of the English texts and was unfailingly generous in his encouragement. The project was patiently overseen by Jonathan Sinclair-Wilson in the philosophy division of the Cambridge University Press, and it found a musical copy editor in Penny Souster. She too made numerous valuable suggestions and continued to assist the book’s progress after her appointment as music editor. Nicholas John, of English National Opera, helped to clarify a point in connection with Tristan and Isolde. Besides con-
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In preparing the substantial Introduction, David Drew also provided a number of comments on the translation.

I would like, finally, to thank the library committee of the University of Nottingham for special facilities, and the arts division of Nottingham Central Library for procuring a copy of Bloch’s *Geist der Utopie*.

P.R.P.
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From the other side: reflections on the Bloch centenary

By David Drew

Question: What is the basic idea in your philosophy?

Bloch: That I cannot see anything at very close quarters, anything that presents itself in front of my eyes. There has to be distance... Proverbs express it very simply: 'The weaver knows not what he weaves'; 'At the foot of the lighthouse there is no light'; 'The prophet is without honour in his own country'.

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To venture a guess at what will forever remain his secret, it is not entirely improbable that, in pondering his road and its destination, Erasmus arrived at conclusions which so filled him with fright that he preferred to lock them away in his heart. He may (or he may not) have surmised that in the last analysis he aimed at something beyond the pale of Christianity; that, thought to the end, his true design was once for all to wreck the wall of fixed causes with their dogmas and institutional arrangements for the sake of that ultimate unity which the causes mean and thwart.

Siegfried Kracauer, 'Erasmus', in Ernst Bloch zu ehren

Marx and Nietzsche are the last German philosophers to have captured the popular imagination outside the German-speaking world. If Nietzsche has lost — and lost perhaps to Freud — the dubious

1 Bloch's oddly oblique answer to a question posed by a student journal of the day is not fully comprehensible without reference to his lifelong difficulties of seeing, and the blindness that finally overtook him.

2 Siegfried Kracauer, 'Zwei Deutungen in zwei Sprachen', in Ernst Bloch zu ehren, ed. Siegfried Unseld (Frankfurt, 1965), p. 155. Known in the English-speaking world for his study of the German cinema, From Caligari to Hitler, and for his book on Offenbach, Kracauer (1889–1966) was one of the outstanding sociologists, essayists and editors in Weimar Germany. His difficult first meeting with Bloch in 1924 is recalled, in the light of their subsequent lifelong friendship, by Bloch in Tagträume vom aufrechten Gang (Frankfurt, 1977, ed. Arno Münster), pp. 47–8. Kracauer appends his Erasmus essay (in English) to his eightieth birthday tribute to Bloch (in German), claiming, with mock innocence, that he had not wished to arrive empty-handed and had therefore brought an essay written some years before. Be that as it may, its relevance to Bloch is so clear, so consistent, and so telling, that the essay can only be read as a second and crowning tribute in which every critical reservation honours its concealed subject.
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honour of being in that sense a household name, that is no reflection on his real achievement, but only on the fact that it was in his name among others that hitherto unthinkable crimes were, within living memory, committed against the entire household of Western culture and humanity.

With the notable exception of Heidegger, almost every German philosopher worthy of the calling joined the great emigration from Hitler’s Germany, whether literally or (like Jaspers until his removal), in spirit. For most, the traditional havens of Vienna and Prague, Basle and Paris, served their traditional purpose until, towards the end of the decade, circumstances called for a second and equally momentous emigration: westwards, to America.

That it was the America of Roosevelt’s New Deal was generally influential. That it was also, for the Marxist left, expressly or tacitly the chosen alternative to Stalin’s Russia, became crucial: a crossroads, and even for some a kind of personal cross. Of the leading German Marxist thinkers, only György Lukács had (immediately) chosen Moscow; and there he was to remain until the end of the Second World War, true to the party he had joined in 1918 and apparently at one with the Stalinist consequences of the Leninism to which he had fully committed himself by the early 1920s. His friend and antagonist, exact contemporary and truest counterpart, was Ernst Bloch, who took the more familiar path through Paris and Prague, and in 1938 sailed for New York. Bloch’s speech ‘Zerstörte Sprache–Zerstörte Kultur’ – delivered to the Association of German

1 György (or Georg) Lukács was born in Budapest in 1885 and died there in 1971. Though rightly claimed as a Hungarian, he is none the less a central figure in the intellectual history of the German-speaking world in the twentieth century. He completed his philosophical and sociological studies in Germany, and it was in Germany that his reputation was established before the First World War. His post-1918 commitment to Marxism and to revolutionary politics was signalled by the publication in Berlin in 1923 of a volume of recent essays collected under the title Geschicte Und Klassenbewusstsein. For Bloch’s review of that collection, see the Complete Edition (henceforth GA) 10, p. 620; for a curious epilogue to the long and complex Bloch–Lukács relationship, see the three-cornered discussion with the German philosopher Iring Fetscher in Rainer Traub and Harald Weiser, Gespräche mit Ernst Bloch (Frankfurt, 1975), p. 28. Leszek Kolakowski’s study of Lukács in vol. 3 (‘The Breakdown’) of his Main Currents of Marxism (Oxford University Press, 1978) is critical, but strikingly sympathetic compared to his subsequent critique of Bloch in the same volume. Cf. Kolakowski’s contribution – not listed in his bibliography – to Georg Lukács. Festschrift zum 80. Geburtstag (ed. Frank Benseler, Neuwied: Luchterhand, 1965), George Liktheim’s Lukács (London: Fontana/Collins, 1970) is an excellent short introduction.

4 Ernst Bloch, Vom Hasard zur Katastrophe (Frankfurt, 1972), pp. 403–27.
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Writers in New York in 1939, and published in Moscow that same year – ended with four English words: ‘The Rights of Man’.

Unlike Adorno, Horkheimer, Marcuse, and their colleagues from the Hegelian-Marxist Frankfurt School, Bloch arrived in the United States without clear prospects of a post, and predictably failed to find one. After two years of hardship in New York and New Hampshire, he moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts, where he wrote most of his magnum opus, Das Prinzip Hoffnung. Apart from his address in 1939 to the Congress of American Writers, his appearances and his publications in the New World were confined to German exile circles.

In 1948, his sixty-fourth year, Bloch accepted the offer of a professorship of philosophy at the University of Leipzig, then in the Russian zone and recently re-constituted as the Karl-Marx University. The following summer he and his family arrived in what had already been established as the German Democratic Republic. In his inaugural address at the university he spoke of the charts and the skills required in order to navigate ‘the ocean . . . that lies before us’ – an ocean of ‘circumscribed possibilities’. Implicit in his ‘principle, Hope’ was the need to discriminate between short-term and long-term possibilities, and real rather than merely dogmatic limitations. For Bloch, in his public role as in his thinking, the problems of navigation were not simply a matter of enlightened confidence in the accuracy of existing charts – the ‘Seekarte’ of his inaugural speech – but also of constant deep-water soundings.

A collision between Bloch and the Ulbricht regime was nevertheless at some point inevitable. That should already have been clear from any but the most cursory or selective reading of his post-1918 work – including, in their proper context, his notorious apologia for Stalin’s Moscow show trials. The event that indirectly precipitated the collision occurred in February 1956, when Kruschev delivered to the Twentieth Congress of the Soviet Communist Party his com-

5 Cited in Sylvia Markun, Ernst Bloch (Hamburg-Reinbek: Rowohlt, 1977), p. 82.
6 ‘Kritik einer Prozesskritik’ (Die neue Weltbühne, Prague, 4 March 1937) ‘Jubiläum der Renegaten’ (ibid., 11 November 1937), and ‘Bucharins Schlusswort’ (ibid., 5 May 1938) are reprinted in Bloch, Vom Hasard zur Katastrophe; Oskar Negt’s postface to the volume (‘Ernst Bloch – der deutsche Philosoph der Oktoberrevolution’) is primarily a defence of these articles in their historical context, and in relation to the much-criticised omissions and revisions in GA 11, to which Vom Hasard zur Katastrophe acts as an indispensable documentary appendix.

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prehensive indictment of Stalin’s errors, crimes and general misrule – and above all, because it was intended to explain all, of the ‘cult of personality’. Unwittingly Kruschev had dismantled part of the fortress upon which Russia’s control of the Eastern bloc depended, and demolished ideological safeguards that have since proved irreplaceable.

Criticim of Bloch’s ‘revisionism’ had been voiced in party journals, intermittently, since the start of the 1950s. Yet his seventieth birthday in 1955 – just six months before the epoch-making Congress – was marked by the kind of official celebrations that people’s democracies reserve for the blameless great. Despite his age there was no talk of retirement, and seemingly no thought of it: the official as well as the real sense of the celebrations was that he was still at the height of his prodigious powers. So it was very much as a public figure that Bloch addressed a distinguished audience at the Humboldt University in East Berlin in November 1956, on the occasion of the 125th anniversary of the death of Hegel. In tones that would have rejoiced the heart of Brecht – who had died just three months before – he attacked party functionaries who sought to reduce the discussion of Marx and Hegel to the level of a ‘hatter’s competition’, and who seemed to believe ‘one could play the Ninth Symphony on a comb’. The fervour with which Bloch now reiterated his attacks on rigid dogma and his pleas for a wise tolerance was unmistakably heightened by events in Hungary, where Russian troops were at that moment crushing the uprising in support of the anti-Stalinist government formed by Imre Nagy. Among the members of that government – all of whom were exiled to Rumania – was Lukács.

Lukács and his colleagues in the ‘Petőfi circle’ had been the intellectual forerunners of the Hungarian uprising. Their connections with Wolfgang Harich, who together with Bloch had founded the highly respected journal Die Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie (and who was also Bloch’s editor in the state-controlled Aufbau Verlag), were well known in the GDR. Soon after Bloch had delivered his widely reported Hegel address and returned to Leipzig, Harich was arrested, together with other members of a ‘revisionist circle’ that included three ex-pupils of Bloch. The end-of-year issue of Neues Deutschland contained an article by Ulbricht criticising

7 Cited in Markun, Ernst Bloch, pp. 93–4.
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research and teaching at the Karl-Marx University in Leipzig, but not mentioning Bloch by name.

A month later, Ulbricht addressed the central committee of the SED on the subject of the Harich ‘conspiracy’, its connections with West German interests and the Petőfi circle, and its open endorsement of the Yugoslavian ‘experiment’. The awkward task of censoring Bloch himself was assigned to a second speaker, Kurt Hager. With a fine flourish of platitudes, Hager declared that as a teacher and thinker Bloch laid too much stress on the subjective, despaired facts, ignored the disciplines of dialectical materialism, and concentrated on ‘remote objectives rather than the current realities of the class struggle’. While granting that his philosophy ‘obviously contains strongly humanistic and progressive tendencies’ he concluded that ‘it is basically a form of idealism, divorced from real life and the struggle of the working classes’.⁸

In due course Harich was sentenced to ten years’ imprisonment for organising and leading a ‘counter-revolutionary’ group, and Bloch’s three pupils received lesser sentences. The offices of Die Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie were raided by the police, Bloch was removed from the editorial board, and a special issue containing Ulbricht’s speech to the central committee was substituted for the issue planned by Harich and Bloch. At the central committee’s bidding, Leipzig University held in April 1957 a two-day conference on Bloch’s philosophy. Predictably its conclusions coincided with Kurt Hager’s.

Compulsorily retired at the end of the 1955–6 year, Bloch was now isolated from student life, though by no means disgraced. He retained a second academic post, and in 1959 Aufbau published the first volume of Das Prinzip Hoffnung. By then he had already secured an alternative publishing outlet in the West, thanks to the links with the Suhrkamp Verlag in Frankfurt which Brecht had so wisely cultivated in earlier years. 1959 saw the publication by Suhrkamp of the first complete edition of Das Prinzip Hoffnung, and the first volume in what was to become a seventeen-part Complete Edition.

In 1960 Bloch was vociferously welcomed by large student audiences at the West German universities of Tübingen, Heidelberg, and Stuttgart. On his return to the Federal Republic for a summer

⁸ Ibid., p. 96.

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holiday in 1961, he visited Bayreuth and became friends with Wieland Wagner. He and his wife were still there on 13 August, when Germany awoke to find that the Eastern sector of Berlin had been blocked off by a wall. Concluding that the risk of never recovering the manuscripts upon which the Complete Edition relied was less than the sum of the risks that returning to them would entail, Bloch and his wife resolved to stay in the West, where their son had already settled. With his appointment as Guest Professor in Philosophy at Tübingen later that year, he could at last resume the teaching responsibilities he had been deprived of in Leipzig five years before. In no respect did he modify his views to suit the new circumstances; nor did he avail himself of the tempting rewards and privileges which the West reserves for eminent fugitives from the East.

The special understanding Bloch established with the West German protest movement when it erupted in 1966 was manifestly related to the integrity of his bearing before and after 1961. Although most of the ideological fuel for the protest movement had come from the Frankfurt School – notably from Marcuse and Adorno – Bloch’s unique experience and personal authority helped him exert a moderating influence that was specifically his own. The primitive Leninist position ‘beyond’ good and evil was one that Bloch refused to countenance, and although he was careful to cite the young Marx and even Lenin himself in support of his own moral and ethical scruples, the Judeo-Christian background was never disguised. A lifetime’s preoccupation with the New Testament in particular had begun with the first (1918) edition of Geist der Utopie – for all its invocations of ‘the profound designating power of heroic-mystical atheism’. It continued by way of the sixteenth-century revolutionary priest Thomas Münzer, was enhanced in the United States through friendship with the socialist theologian Paul Tillich (who had been Adorno’s sponsor for a professorship at Frankfurt University in 1931), and culminated, exactly fifty years after the first publication of Geist der Utopie, in the passionately heretical Atheismus im Christentum, which belongs to the same year and the same climate as Bloch’s friendly and much-publicised debate with Rudi Dutschke.

For many of Bloch’s admirers and all his fiercest critics no heresy of his has been so shocking as his (subjective!) recognition of man’s inherently religious nature. Whereas Lukács soon abandoned the metaphysics with which he set out in his pre-Marxist days, Bloch, whose friendship with him had been formed in those days and was to
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be commemorated in the dedication of his posthumous *Tendenz–Latenz–Utopie*, revised much but rejected nothing. Having finished the fifteenth volume of the Complete Edition in his ninetieth year and dedicated it to the memory of Rosa Luxemburg, he decreed that the sixteenth and last should be an un-retouched facsimile of the first (and later completely revised) edition of *Geist der Utopie*.

Theological initiatives were largely responsible for the short-lived discovery of Bloch in the USA in the late 1960s (as they were for his rather earlier and more durable recognition in France and South America). They were, however, questioned on strictly tactical grounds at the very start of the weightiest essay published in the USA in the aftermath of the events at Berkeley, Fredric Jameson’s ‘Ernst Bloch and the Future’.9 Jameson begins by remarking that in his *Thomas Münzer* (1921) Bloch characterises the ‘theologian of revolution’ in a manner suggestive of his own aims, and that this is dangerous insofar as the idea of Marxism as a religion is ‘one of the main arguments in the arsenal of anti-communism’. Bloch was by no means oblivious of that danger, and repeatedly sought to avert it. But within a year of Bloch’s death the full force of Jameson’s observation was demonstrated from an unexpected and influential quarter. The Polish philosopher Leszek Kolakowski had made his name as one of the young Warsaw revisionists in the early 1960s, and as such had been commended and approvingly quoted by Bloch. But the three-volume study of Marxism which Kolakowski published in England and America in 1978, after his emigration to the West, concludes with a volume entitled ‘The Breakdown’;10 and it is in the chapter devoted to Bloch and the alleged irresponsibility of his quasi-religious utopianism that Kolakowski finally dismisses Marxism as a malignant will o’ the wisp that has deluded mankind for generations.

Without visibly straining to be fair even in matters of detail, Kolakowski contrives to suggest that Bloch’s philosophy is beneath


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serious consideration as such. Readers puzzled about why the author
nevertheless lavishes some thirty pages on it will find the answer in
the ‘epilogue’; although Bloch is no longer mentioned by name, most
of the ideological debris Kolakowski assembles as conclusive proof
of Marxism’s ‘breakdown’ derives from his demolition of Bloch, and
the remainder is clearly related to it. By referring to chiliastic sects in
this ostensibly impersonal context rather than in the Bloch chapter,
where the reference properly belongs, Kolakowski effects a suitably
dramatic transition from the evidence (which is abundant) of
Marxism’s false prophecies, to his crowning charge that Marxism
panders to a ‘psychological need for certainty’ and that in this sense
it ‘performs the function of a religion, and its efficacy is of a religious
character’. 11

Dr Wayne Hudson, the author of the first and so far the only full
length study of Bloch’s philosophy in any language, avoids mention-
ing Kolakowski’s critique until he has reached his own epilogue.
‘Obviously’ he writes,

Bloch is neither a philosopher nor a Marxist if he advances an intellectually
irresponsible gnostic futurism, or a wholly out-of-date identity meta-
physic. Indeed granted this interpretation, the problem is not to show that
Bloch is not a Marxist, but to explain how he could ever have imagined that
he was a Marxist at all. 12

Since the latter ‘problem’ already answers itself in terms of its own
premise it is no answer to Kolakowski but seems to be merely a
baffle-screen for its equally questionable but strikingly resonant pre-
decessor. To have shown that Bloch ‘is not a Marxist’ would no
doubt have been child’s play for Kolakowski, but would hardly have
furthered his case that Bloch’s philosophy is representative of the
‘breakdown’ of Marxism as a whole. In substance, though not of
course in tendency, Kolakowski’s objections to Bloch’s outlook and
methodology are intimately related to those that had been voiced in
the GDR since the early 1950s. Bloch emerges as an incorrigible
romantic.

Asked by a West German student journal in 1970 whether he was
a Marxist, Bloch replied:

Properly speaking, a Marxist must also be a philosopher; and he who is a

11 Ibid., p. 526.
12 Wayne Hudson, The Marxist Philosophy of Ernst Bloch (London: Macmillan,
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philosopher must, in order to be one, be either a Marxist or, involuntarily, an ideologist of the ruling classes. If Marxism is not philosophy it is Vulgar Marxism, and will soon become counter-revolutionary. There is a fine phrase of Isaak Babel, the great Russian writer who was done to death by Stalin: Banality is counter-revolution. Marxism would become banal if it became schematic.\(^{13}\)

To which the orthodox and the unbeliever alike would both perhaps reply that a philosophical Marxism, however admirable or deplorable its objectives, but especially if it develops an oracular tendency from its residue of idealism and mysticism, is so far removed from the science that Marx believed he had created as to be scarcely discussable in the same context.

Marx’s famous and much misused quip that he was not a Marxist belongs within the field of Bloch’s lifelong resistance to static concepts and closed systems. At an early stage he had steeped himself in the tradition of process philosophy, from its classical origins through Böhme and Leibnitz, through Schelling and Hegel, and finally to Bergson. Everything he subsequently acquired and developed from Marx was calculated to strengthen and define the processual in terms of tensions, tendencies, and latencies: above all, the ‘tension of impeded precipitations’ (‘der Spannung des verhindert Fälligen’) and the latency of ‘not yet realised possibilities’ (‘noch nicht verwirklichte Möglichkeiten’)\(^{14}\) towards whose objective reality mankind’s utopian dreams and experiments have everywhere and at all times called attention, whatever absurdities are immediately apparent in them, and however sure their ultimate failure. The itinerary, he insisted, is not decisive:

The main thing... is that the utopian conscience-and-knowledge grows wise from the damage it suffers from facts, yet does not grow to full wisdom. It is rectified by the mere power of that which, at any particular time, is, but is never refuted by it. On the contrary, it confronts and judges the existent if it is failing and failing inhumanly; indeed, first and foremost it provides the standard to measure such facticity precisely as departure from the right; and, above all, to measure it immanently: that is, by the ideas which have resounded and been inculcated from time immemorial before such a departure and which are still displayed and proposed in the face of it.\(^{15}\)

\(^{13}\) ‘Ein falscher Sozialismus ist kein Sozialismus’, in Rainer Traub and Harald Wieser (eds.), Gespräche mit Ernst Bloch (Frankfurt, 1975), p. 139.

\(^{14}\) Ernst Bloch, Das Prinzip Hoffnung, GA 5, p. 727.

\(^{15}\) Ernst Bloch, Tübinger Einleitung in die Philosophie, GA 13, pp. 96–7. John Cumming’s translation of the section containing the paragraph cited here first appeared under the title ‘The Meaning of Utopia’ in A Philosophy of the Future
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To be unmoved by such a passage, and to resist it, is in effect to resist all Bloch. But even those who feel compelled to do so on principle, or for some other reason, may yet recognise the injustice of the charge that facts for Bloch ‘have no ontological meaning and may be ignored without hesitation’. Nevertheless, Bloch’s often-repeated contention that socialism has made ‘too great a leap from Utopia to Science’ remains strikingly heretical in the context of his self-imposed isolation from an entire range of (economic) facts relevant to the theory and practice of Marxism, and hence to the discrimination of its functions, malfunctions, and alleged breakdown. In expressing his disquiet about the too-great leap, Bloch knowingly distanced himself from the mainstream of Marxist studies, but also from any fair-weather friends he might have found among those who were already proclaiming at the end of World War II that ‘scientific’ Marxism was dead, but not its ‘moral radicalism . . . its feeling of social responsibility and its love for freedom’.

The words are Karl Popper’s in *The Open Society and its Enemies* – a key-work in post-war Hegel-and-Marx criticism and an evident precursor of Kolakowski. ‘It is this moral radicalism of Marx’, wrote Popper (in the era of Beveridge and Bevan) ‘which explains his influence; and that is a hopeful fact in itself. This moral radicalism is still alive, and it is our task to keep it alive, to prevent it from going the way that his political radicalism will have to go.’ Between *The Open Society* and Bloch’s so-called Open System, as between the ‘might-have-been’ evoked by Popper in his assessment (via Marx’s prophecies) of actual events from 1864 to 1930, and the ‘not yet’ evoked by Bloch in surveying the entire history of mankind up to and including the 1970s, there are some paradoxical affinities, and a chasm that can perhaps be bridged.

Kolakowski argues that because Bloch is aware that his notion of the Ultimum has no support from ‘the existing rules of scientific thought’ he instead ‘invokes the aid of imagination, artistic inspi-
ration and enthusiasm’. This, we are given to understand, would be a forgivable peccadillo if Bloch considered himself a poet. In that case, Kolakowski continues, the results of his ‘anticipating fancy’ could be shelved beside the frankly hallucinative poetry-philosophy of the ‘surrealists’ (meaning, presumably, Breton and his successors). Yet their philosophy, he concludes, is ‘only’ an offshoot of their art, whereas Bloch ‘purports to be using the language of discursive philosophy, in which the ambiguity of basic concepts is suicidal’.

It is at this point that Dr Hudson’s defence of Bloch wavers alarmingly. The problem as Hudson defines it is that Bloch’s recursive modernism – a refuncting procedure generally associated with the Frankfurt School – ‘forces him to retreat into cypher talk at so many analytically crucial points that Open System runs the risk of being poetry philosophy, a theurgic aestheticon Weltanschauung: a system of faith in hope with splendid meta-mystical meditations, but little explanatory power’.

Thrust into the dock where Freud (whom he revered) has repeatedly been arraigned for ‘unscientific’ procedures and where Marx has been condemned on every ground, Bloch can survive the denunciations more easily than the embarrassments of a defence that calls to the witness box friends and colleagues who will testify that he was a ‘good’ man, a brave, and indeed a noble, one. But suddenly there arrives in England – of all countries surely the least aware of Bloch’s existence, let alone his greatness – an unexpected emissary who brings neither an ecumenical appeal for clemency nor even a pretext for one, but simply a collection of the essays he has translated from a volume published more than a decade ago – a volume whose significance had been quite overlooked in the English speaking world.

Perhaps as a present for Bloch’s ninetieth birthday, certainly as a little gallery from which to observe from an unexpected angle the now-finished edifice of the Complete Edition, his wife Karola assembled, in 1974, an anthology of his musical writings, for publication in the Bibliothek Suhrkamp series under the title Zur Philosopie der Musik. The first half of the anthology is devoted to the complete

22 Hudson, Marxist Philosophy, pp. 151–2.

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‘Philosophy of Music’ from the 1923 version of Geist der Utopie; the second half ends with a comparable excerpt from Das Prinzip Hoffnung; and between comes a sequence of articles and reviews from the inter-war period. The delight this 330-page volume must have given its now all-but-blind author was surely heightened by the companion volume his publishers, with extraordinary sensitivity, provided for it: a new edition of Busoni’s Entwurf einer neuen Ästhetik der Tonkunst, incorporating Schoenberg’s marginal notes transcribed from his own copy of the first edition. In his postscript, H. H. Stuckenschmidt described the Entwurf as ‘a piece of the true Utopia’.

Busoni had published his Entwurf in Trieste in 1907, and dedicated it to ‘Rilke, the musician in words’; Bloch had written Geist der Utopie in wartime Switzerland (where Busoni too sought refuge) between April 1915 and May 1917, and dedicated it to his first wife Else von Stritzky, a devout Christian who died in 1921 but remained a lasting influence on his work. One of the links between the Entwurf and Geist der Utopie is the notoriously ‘unscientific’ Schoenberg, but it is also Schoenberg who helps account for the immense distance between these works — not so much the Schoenberg of the Harmonielehre (1911), which Bloch alludes to, as the Schoenberg who tried in vain to persuade Richard Dehmel in 1912 to collaborate with him on a mystico-revolutionary oratorio.

Geist der Utopie is one of the classics of German Expressionism. Just as its poetic leanings prefigure the poetry of Bloch’s slightly younger contemporaries such as Rudolf Leonhardt and Johannes R. Becher, so do its tonal blends of revolutionary red and biblical blue produce heliotropic effects that seem to envisage the post-1918 paintings of Ludwig Meidner. Contemporary Anglo-American literature has nothing comparable; one has to go back through Shelley to Blake in the one direction, through Melville to the New England Transcendentalists in the other, to find distant equivalents.

In the music of Bloch’s words there are certainly echoes from the Rilke Busoni admired. Far more important, however, is the place of

23 The criticism of Schoenberg’s achievement formulated by his young post-war admirers, notably Pierre Boulez and Karlheinz Stockhausen, is of a kind frequently encountered in Dr Hudson’s exegesis, and summarised in his penultimate paragraph (p. 217), where Bloch is yet again reproached for neglecting to ‘develop systematically’ what is ‘really new’ in his work. Dr Hudson nevertheless feels that Bloch is now one of the ‘bold men’ from whom ‘more careful thinkers’ have much to learn.
honour Geist der Utopie reserves for music itself. In the 1918 edition, the seventy-odd pages preceding ‘Philosophy of Music’ end with an essay on ‘The Comic Hero’ – Don Quixote, briefly but illuminatingly compared with Don Juan. One of the main reasons for the essay’s disappearance from the later edition seems to be structural: although the important Blochian motif of the idealistic day-dream makes its first appearance here, there is no natural progression from the Knight of the Sorrowful Countenance to that realm of heretical freedom which, in Bloch’s world, is music’s own, but which music has nevertheless had to reconquer again and again throughout history. (In that sense Mozart’s Don would have served Bloch better; but his time is yet to come.) The removal of ‘The Comic Hero’ (whose laughter is ‘the laughter of persecution’) leaves the previous chapter’s consideration of Van Gogh and his explosion of ‘still’ life into ‘nameless mythology’ and its references to Kokoschka and Marc, Kandinsky and Pechstein, even Picasso, to prepare for the modernist and revolutionary perspectives of ‘Philosophy of Music’.

Not that wartime Switzerland can have afforded Bloch much opportunity of hearing the music of Kokoschka’s and Kandinsky’s peers. But he had already breathed the planetary air of Schoenberg’s Second String Quartet, and known what it portended for music and the world. The word-play that enables him to conceive of a new age in which ‘Hellhören’ (second hearing, in a visionary sense) will replace the defunct art of ‘Hellssehen’ (second sight, or clairvoyance) reminds us that Geist der Utopie is almost exactly contemporary with Charles Ives’s Essays before a Sonata, where the Hawthorne movement is described as music ‘about something that never will happen, or something else that is not’, and the oracular Beethoven is rediscovered through Emerson and Thoreau.24 Early in ‘Philosophy of Music’ Bloch takes Nietzsche to task for seeing music solely as an art of socio-historical retrospection; near the end, he discovers in Jean-Paul a passage that corresponds precisely to his own view of music as the incarnation of the Utopian spirit. Why, asks Jean-Paul, does music’s capacity to effect transitions more swiftly and potently than any other art ‘make us forget a higher attribute of music, its

24 Henry and Sidney Cowell, Charles Ives and His Music (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), pp. 83–6; the 1969 edition of Ives’s Essays before a Sonata (London: John Calder) includes later essays and documents that extend the Utopian perspectives into the field of populist politics – e.g. the 1938 letter to Roosevelt, and the proposals for ‘A People’s World Nation’.

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power of nostalgia, not for an old country we have left behind but for a virgin one, not for a past but for a future?’

That quotation did not appear until the 1923 revision of Geist der Utopie. But the seeds from which were to grow the forest of Das Prinzip Hoffnung had already been planted and were sprouting in the 1918 version. At a point equidistant between the signpost ‘Das Bachsche und das Beethovensche Kontrapunktieren’ and an excursion to Kepler, Bloch returns by Shakespearean moonlight to Bayreuth, as if to the locus delicti of Romanticism. But the unhappy portents of his earlier visits are not fulfilled; for Wagner is now to be acknowledged as Beethoven’s truest heir. Meanwhile, and still by moonlight, Bloch takes over from Wagner his own rightful portion of Schopenhauer’s vision theory, and uses it to distinguish between the dream that ‘sinks down’ in contemplation of the daylight experience and the one that ‘moves beyond’ what has already existed into a ‘not-yet-conscious-knowledge’ – a knowledge which, by 1923, he can already describe as ‘dawning’. By then, the dream that ‘moves beyond’ is clearly identified with that ‘dream of a thing’ which Marx apostrophised in one of Bloch’s favourite passages, the letter to Ruge of September 1843.25

When all the philosophical sources of Geist der Utopie have been uncovered, when the contributions of Kant and Hegel have been measured against those of Nietzsche and Bergson, when Lukács has been credited with the traces of Dostoevsky and Kierkegaard, and Böhme detached from latter-day theosophists, when Dilthey and Simmel, the Kabbalah, the New Testament, and the Book of Revelations, have all been taken into account, a single absence and a single presence seem to dominate the Utopian whole. The absence, clearly located just beyond the line of vision, and announced by the trumpets and trombones of the final chapter-heading, is that of Marx; the presence is that of a philosopher without whom, as Bloch remarked many years later, there would have been neither Nietzsche nor Freud, nor, for that matter, Marcuse or Adorno – the one philosopher


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whose pessimism was so constructed that it could serve at all times as a crucible for the base and precious metals of Bloch’s optimism: Schopenhauer.26

It was Schopenhauer who held that if it were possible to explain everything that music expresses, the result would be ‘the true philosophy’. In effect, Bloch carries Schopenhauer’s speculation to its extreme. For him, music at its best, and sometimes at its second best, is philosophy, requiring only the broadest of glosses and here and there an exemplary definition. Critics and commentators, including even the gifted Paul Bekker, who prattle about ‘expressively pleading demi-semiquavers’ and see in music a need or excuse for ‘the play of supplementary imagery’ are anathema to Bloch. And no wonder: for it is essential to his philosophical purpose that music is imageless and without narrative form; that it is wholly intelligible as formal process yet enigmatic as to its teleology; that it derives its energy from the anticipatory presence, from intimations of the ‘not-yet’; and therefore (in a crucial phrase which appears only in the 1923 version but applies equally to the original) ‘that music as an inwardly utopian art is completely beyond the scope of everything empirically verifiable’.

Or, as Charles Ives suggests in the Epilogue to his Essays, ‘maybe music was not intended to satisfy the curious definiteness of man; maybe it is better to hope that music may always be a transcendental language in the most extravagant sense’. The Bloch of Geist der Utopie in general, and Philosophie der Musik in particular, has long since abandoned the neo-Kantian pacts between philosophy and science. Like Lukács in The Theory of the Novel (1916) he is developing his own form of Diltheyan ‘Geisteswissenschaft’ and ‘Geistesgeschichte’, in which the play of intuition and mystical irrationalism is central.

Their effect is still felt when Bloch, greatly daring, enters the field of ‘Musikwissenschaft’. His extensive debts to Riemann and his successors — notably Ernst Kurth and Hermann Abert — and again to such leading interpreters and practical musicians as Schweitzer and (with regard to Bruckner) August Halm,37 are more amply repaid in

26 The strength and durability of the inner bond between Bloch and Schopenhauer is attested by his lectures in Tübingen during the winter semester in 1964/5: see ‘Recht und Unrecht des Pessimismus’, in Bloch, ed. Gekle, Abschied, pp. 11–39.
37 Unlike Riemann, Kurth, and Abert, August Halm (1869–1929) has been largely neglected in Anglo-American studies of the history and practice of musical analysis; for Bloch’s debt to his work, see Tibor Kneif, ‘Ernst Bloch und der
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intuitive understanding and imaginative insights than in scholarly precision. Adorno’s complaint\(^{28}\) that Bloch is as impatient with musico-technical logic as with aesthetic discrimination cuts both ways and draws some blood, not all of it Bloch’s. In ‘Philosophy of Music’ it is clear from the start that Bloch has no inhibitions with regard to academic proprieties in musicology, criticism, and appreciation. When in later years he was defending Wagner against ‘impudent snobs’, he remarked that they lacked, among other things, the ability to ‘hear round corners’. That ability he himself possessed to a high degree – which is one reason why it is impossible to imagine him poring over scores to check his references. Yet the idea of furnishing ‘Philosophy of Music’ with pedantic footnotes – let alone ‘correcting’ the actual text – is plainly preposterous.

In that respect there is something to be learnt from the reception of Geist der Utopie. A lengthy review by Margaret Susman in the Frankfurter Zeitung of 12 January 1919\(^{29}\) provoked a riposte from Paul Bekker (who was that paper’s music critic, and can hardly have enjoyed Bloch’s comments on his Beethoven book). Concentrating on Bloch’s cavalier attitude to musical history, his shaky technical analysis, and his proneness to factual error, Bekker concluded that everything Bloch had tried and failed to realise in his ‘Philosophy of Music’ had been achieved by Spengler in the musical section of his precisely contemporary Decline of the West. As Bekker well knew, it was a highly provocative comparison, for Spengler’s prestige and success owed much to the timeliness with which his impressively weighty work had provided the conservative-nationalist middle class with analgesics for the aches and pains of Germany’s defeat.

Little knowing that Spengler was about to be arraigned by Alfred Einstein for musicalological offences no less heinous than Bloch’s, Margaret Susman returned to the fray, protesting, rightly, that Spengler’s and Bloch’s purposes were in no respect comparable, least of all with regard to the role their work allotted to music. She acknowledged Bekker’s incontestable authority in musical matters, but questioned whether it entitled him to isolate the musical strata

\(^{29}\) Susman’s review, and her rejoinder to Bekker’s riposte, are reprinted in the appendix to Unseld, Ernst Bloch zu ehren, pp. 383–93.
from a work of philosophy and then argue that their musicological shortcomings invalidated the whole structure.

If the function of music in Bloch’s philosophy is that of parable and metaphor, detour and shortcut, the case against dissociating such excursions from their philosophical base is not inconsiderable. But the 1974 anthology was excused from answering it by the personal significance it manifestly had and by the historical one that the Busoni volume enhanced. Moreover it was on every side supported by the Complete Edition and its attendant commentaries.

The present anthology must, for the time being, stand alone. Its latticed structure should however offer many points of entry to whatever segments of the Complete Edition may be made available to English readers during the coming years. Like the 1974 anthology, it begins with the ‘Philosophy of Music’ from Geist der Utopie, and ends with a corresponding excerpt from Das Prinzip Hoffnung; between, there is a shorter selection from Bloch’s inter-war writings on musical topics. The essays on The Threepenny Opera, on Stravinsky, and on Wagner which immediately and with challenging effect followed the ‘Philosophy of Music’ in the 1974 anthology have not been included, but on historical grounds certainly merit our consideration here.

All three essays reflect, from different angles, Bloch’s friendship with the conductor Otto Klemperer. Although their personal acquaintance did not begin until they were introduced to each other by Furtwängler in Berlin in the early twenties, Klemperer had read and been enthralled by the manuscript of Geist der Utopie as early as 1916 (thanks to his friend and Bloch’s former teacher Georg Simmel). At that stage the manuscript probably still lacked its apostrophes to Marx. By 1924 and the first publication of the essay ‘On the Mathematical and the Dialectical Character of Music’, Bloch had evolved his idiosyncratic version of Marxism, and Klemperer was joyfully fulfilling the first of his major conducting engagements in the Soviet Union. The revolutionary production of Fidelio with which Klemperer opened ‘his’ Kroll Opera in September 1927 was influenced by his theatre-going in Moscow; and it was surely he who was responsible for commissioning from Bloch the introductory

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essay in the programme-book. Later that season Bloch likewise introduced Klemperer’s own production of Don Giovanni.\(^\text{31}\)

At the Baden-Baden festival of German Chamber Music in May 1927 Klemperer (who was accompanied by his future Dramaturg at the Kroll, Hans Curjel) had been enraptured by Kurt Weill’s Mahagonny, a Songspiel or scenic cantata to texts by Brecht. Bloch was not present at that occasion, but Weill attended the premiere of Fidelio together with his wife Lotte Lenya, and their friendship with Bloch was consolidated during the following year, after the epoch-making premiere of The Threepenny Opera at the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm, in August. October saw the Kroll premiere of Stravinsky’s The Soldier’s Tale, directed by Brecht’s close friend Jacob Geis, designed by Piscator’s discovery Traugott Müller, and conducted by Klemperer. Bloch’s notes on The Soldier’s Tale and Oedipus Rex (rescued from the previous season’s Stravinsky programme) were the basis of his important later essay, ‘Zeitecho Stravinskij’.\(^\text{33}\)

Klemperer’s admiration for The Threepenny Opera led to the commissioning of the suite, Kleine Dreigroschenoper, which he first conducted in January 1929 at one of the Kroll Opera concerts; Bloch’s similar enchantment led to his marvellous essay on the ‘Pirate-Jenny’ Song, which he dedicated to Weill and Lenya and published in January 1929.\(^\text{34}\) That same month, Klemperer conducted Jürgen Fehling’s radically new production of The Flying Dutchman. No small element in the uproar created by that production in nationalist and proto-Nazi circles was Bloch’s introductory and style-defining essay ‘Rettung Wagners durch Karl May’ (Rescue of Wagner through Karl May) (which was included in the 1974 anthology under the later title ‘Rettung Wagners durch surrealistische Kolportage’ (Rescue of Wagner through surrealistic Penny Dreadfuls)). Bayreuth, it seemed, was about to be stormed by Peachum and his beggars.

\(^\text{31}\) Bloch’s connections with the Kroll are documented in Hans Curjel, Experiment Krolloper 1927–1931 (Munich: Prestel Verlag, 1975).

\(^\text{32}\) The relationship between Bloch and Weill is discussed by the present writer in the closing section of his contribution to The New Orpheus, a symposium edited by Professor Kim Kowalke for the Yale University Press, due to be published in 1985.

\(^\text{33}\) ‘Zeitecho Stravinskij’ was included in Erbschaft dieser Zeit and was reprinted in Zur Philosophie der Musik.

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From *The Threepenny Opera* to *The Flying Dutchman* would for most musical travellers of the day have been an inordinately long and dangerous journey; for Bloch it was surely no more demanding than the one that had taken him, on numberless youthful occasions, from his family home in the industrial port of Ludwigshafen to the old Palatinate capital of Mannheim on the opposite side of the Rhine.\(^3^5\) The fairgrounds and circuses and amusement arcades of plebeian Ludwigshafen offered the young Bloch delights far removed from the patrician theatres and libraries of Schiller’s Mannheim. In music as in the other arts his ‘questionable’ taste was a vital part of his own questioning of ‘taste’ and the hierarchies it stood for; but it was equally a part of his quest for the utopian spirit in whatever guise it might appear. There was no condescension about his tributes to those forms of popular art and *Kitsch* that reflected a universal truth. The chapter in *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* concerning fairs and circuses, fairytales and penny dreadfuls, is entitled ‘Bessere Luftschlösser’ ('better castles in the air').

Bloch’s passion for aerial and low life excursions was one of his many bonds with Walter Benjamin, the outstanding critical mind among his younger German contemporaries and, like Klemperer, an early admirer of *Geist der Utopie*. It was surely thanks to Bloch and his essay on Offenbach’s *Tales of Hoffmann* – written for the 1930 Kroll Opera production by Brecht’s friend and colleague Ernst Legal – that Benjamin, whose genius was either unresponsive to music or else (in some sense that he never defined) intimidated by it, ventured his only essay on a musical subject – the Offenbach section of his great Karl Kraus study, first published in the programme book for the 1931 Kroll production of *La Périchole* in the Kraus version.

The closure of the Kroll at the end of the 1930–1 season was rightly seen to be representative of a reactionary trend evident at all levels of German culture and society. For Bloch and Benjamin, as for Brecht, there was no hope of reversing the trend unless Marxist theory was put into action, which meant collective and party action. The possible consequences of that for intellectuals who were unwilling or unready to repudiate their heritage of ‘bourgeois’ individualism and morality had already been examined in Brecht’s first indisputable masterpiece for the theatre, *Die Massnahme* (The

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Measures Taken), a Lehrstück set to music by Hanns Eisler and first performed in Berlin in the autumn of 1930 under the baton of Karl Rankl (Klemperer’s chorus-master at the Kroll). Functionally ambiguous as it is, Die Massnahme examines Leninist theory and practice in terms that cut straight across the two currents in Marxism characterised by Bloch as ‘cold stream’ and ‘warm stream’. The fact that the ‘measures taken’ are in principle consistent with the new morality of revolution propounded by Lukács in the post-1918 era, has a direct and curious bearing on the debates with Lukács in which Bloch, Brecht, and Eisler were engaged during the 1930s. But Die Massnahme itself does not figure in Bloch’s writings, and is not even mentioned in his 1938 essay on Brecht, ‘Ein Leninist der Schaubühne’, or its important predecessor ‘Romane der Wunderlichkeit und montiertes Theater’ which proceeds from Kafka through Proust and Joyce to the ‘Leninist’ Brecht.36

Die Massnahme happened to introduce (and today throws an inquisitorial light upon) an era in which most of the ‘measures taken’ were strictly reactionary. The closure of the Kroll was representative in that a plausible case could be made for it in terms understandable to all. Its effect on the flow of Bloch’s musical writings was immediate: the only musical essay Bloch was to publish during the two years that remained to him in Germany dealt with an opera that Klemperer had taken a close personal interest in – Weill’s Die Bürgschaft.37

Bloch’s first major undertaking in exile was Erbschaft dieser Zeit (Heritage of this Time), a collection, or as he preferred to call it, a ‘montage’ of those essays and occasional pieces from the Weimar years that needed to be rearranged in the light of the catastrophe of 1933 and used as indications of the building materials required for the tasks of fortification and reconstruction. (In the original 1935 edition music was represented only by the essays on Stravinsky and on The Threepenny Opera, but the enlarged 1959 edition adds the inflammatory ‘Rescue of Wagner through Karl May’). The book established the complex of watchtowers and dug-outs from which Bloch, Brecht, Benjamin, and a few others were to conduct their campaign against so-called Socialist Realism in the aftermath of the


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As a result of one of the Congress’s resolutions, Brecht, Lion Feuchtwanger, and Willi Bredel of the KPD were appointed editors of Das Wort, a new German language periodical to be published in Moscow. For various reasons, some of them purely practical, the editorial trio was unable to fulfil its proper functions, and by 1937 Das Wort was in effect directed by Lukács and his Moscow circle. In the September issue, Klaus Mann and Alfred Kurella led an attack on the ‘heritage’ of Expressionism with particular reference to the case of the poet Gottfried Benn, by far the most distinguished figure among the small group of erstwhile Expressionists who had attempted to come to terms with Nazism. Kurella, who in 1931 had published in Moscow an extensive critique of Die Massnahme, was one of Lukács’s closest associates. He took as his starting point Lukács’s own polemic against Expressionism, published three years before in another of Moscow’s German language periodicals. The break with Bloch, and indirectly with Brecht and Benjamin, was now in the open.

Bloch was at this time working in Prague as a regular contributor to Die neue Weltbühne. His first published reaction to the debate was an article in the 4 November issue of Die neue Weltbühne entitled, simply, ‘Der Expressionismus’. It made only passing reference to Lukács (and to Kurella under his pen-name Ziegler), but ended with a lengthy quotation from Geist der Utopie, every line of which Lukács himself must once have known almost by heart.

A month later Bloch continued the debate in partnership with the composer Hanns Eisler, whom he had first encountered in Berlin in 1930, but had lost touch with for the past four years. (Eisler spent the last three months of 1937 in Prague and then headed for New York, where Bloch was soon to join him.) The two imaginary dialogues they published in Die neue Weltbühne in December 1937 and January 1938 testified to their now consolidated friendship and to their sense of common cause against the Lukács circle.38 The first, entitled ‘Avantgarde and Popular Front’ was between an Optimist and a Sceptic. The latter begins as a Lukácsian anti-modernist, but ends by agreeing with the Optimist that the anti-fascist masses and


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the 'new' (meaning politicised) avant-garde are interdependent and must proceed together. Though music was hardly touched upon in this part of the dialogue, Bloch had found a dramatic way of returning to the subject after more than five years' silence.

In the second dialogue, 'Die Kunst zu erben', the participants are the Art-lover (Kunstfreund) and the Art-producer (künstlerischer Produzent). Though it is still a joint work and not, as some commentators have assumed, a quasi-naturalistic dialogue between Bloch as Kunstfreund and Eisler as Produzent, the points of view tend to be more characteristic of the individual participants than in the previous dialogue, and in some passages become wholly so. The direct leap from Offenbach to Wagner which the Art-lover accomplishes in order to affirm Wagner's status as the 'greatest musical phenomenon since Beethoven' was, for such a readership at such a time, a death-defying audacity, and quite unthinkable without the authority that Bloch alone could lend to it. Only a few sentences later Bloch does, in effect, take full responsibility for it by including the name of Eisler in a list – and most remarkable one – of key figures in modernism: Picasso, Stravinsky, Schoenberg, Eisler, Bartók, Dos Passos and Brecht (in that order).

The omission of some names unquestionably important to Bloch – notably Joyce's, since Mann's was scarcely admissible in this context – is less significant than the astonishing inclusion of both Stravinsky and Schoenberg. Stravinsky's barely concealed flirtations with fascism in the 1930s and Schoenberg's more forthright expressions of an old and true conservatism made their presence in the list highly provocative, and not least with regard to the Optimist's case for the natural alliance between modernism and progressive politics. Equally heretical, and equally typical of Bloch – but also of Klemperer – was the juxtaposition of Schoenberg and Stravinsky regardless of the fact that their work since the revolutionary years had divided the musical avant garde into two apparently irreconcilable camps. The possibility of a Hegelian construction on the antithetical basis of Schoenberg and Stravinsky, with Eisler and Bartók as the two halves of a proposed synthesis, is latent in the structure of the list, and seems consistent with the reference to the