

Toward an open system: Ernst Bloch's 'not-yet-being' ontology and its philosophical implications

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Abstract. Ernst Bloch, as a pivotal figure in early Western Marxism, constructed his philosophy of hope centered on the ontology of 'not-yet-being' (noch-nicht-sein), offering a groundbreaking perspective for traditional philosophical systems. This study traces the conceptual history of his system, analyzes Bloch's original texts, and compares his thought with other Marxist scholars to reveal the uniqueness of his ontology: beyond the binary opposition of being and non-being, Bloch introduces 'not-yet-being' as a dynamic, processual concept, redefining existence as a perpetually unfolding and incomplete state. This ontology synthesizes the Left Aristotelian theory of potentiality, the openness of Hegelian dialectics, and Marx's historical materialism, forming a generative logic of 'nothingness-not-yet-all.' Bloch's system not only deconstructs ontological closure but also, through the concept of an 'open cosmos,' interprets cultural phenomena as unfinished processes imbued with utopian impulses, endowing them with dual significance for both understanding and transforming the world. This paper argues that Bloch's open system responds to the 20th-century crisis of spirit while providing methodological insights for contemporary systems research. By emphasizing indeterminacy and possibility, his philosophy pioneers a path for constructing autonomous knowledge systems beyond Euro-centrism, offering critical inspiration for transcending metaphysical constraints and engaging with multicultural realities.

Keywords: Bloch, not-yet, ontology, openness, system

1. Introduction

As a representative thinker of early Western Marxism, Ernst Bloch (1885–1977) developed his philosophy around hope with profound implications. Grounded in the ontology of 'not-yet-being,' Bloch offered a penetrating critique of the human condition and provided unique interpretations of various cultural phenomena. This paper argues that, from the concept of 'not-yet' to the ontology of 'not-yet-being,' Bloch presents the possibility of an open philosophical system. This philosophical system exhibits distinctive characteristics on two levels: on the theoretical level of ontology, he explores 'not-yet-being' beyond the conventional duality of 'being' and 'non-being'; on the level of cultural analysis, his presentation of an 'open cosmos' adopts a perspective that focuses on the utopian impulse inherent in creations. Drawing from Bloch's ontology of 'not-yet-being,' this paper examines, on one hand, the potential inspirations of such openness for systemic study, and on the other hand, attempts to analyze the possible solutions Bloch's system offers to the spiritual crises of the post-20th century era.

Research on Bloch has advanced significantly over the past decades. Scholars have increasingly recognized the importance of this Western Marxist thinker, with studies demonstrating diversity, depth, and comprehensiveness [1-4]. However, few research has yet focused on the concept of 'system' within Bloch's thought. This paper aims to narrow this gap by exploring the possibility of such an open system and further discussing the necessity of revisiting Bloch's 'not-yet' philosophy in the contemporary context.

2. The two contexts of Bloch's 'open system'

The proposal of Bloch's 'open system' is rooted in two key contexts: the historical lineage of intellectual origins and the epochal backdrop of the 20th century. While the notion of an 'open system' is not unprecedented in the history of philosophy, Bloch's unique contribution lies in his system's critical synthesis of traditional philosophical resources and its profound response to real-world challenges. To elucidate the groundbreaking significance of this system, this paper will analyze it through two dimensions: first, Bloch's inheritance and development of the tradition of openness in the philosophies of Aristotle, Hegel, and

Marx, which constitutes the contextual lineage of his theoretical framework; second, the ideological confrontations, political crises, and personal experiences of exile in the tumultuous 20th century, which form the historical backdrop for the formation of his unique philosophical system. The former focuses on the internal logic of philosophical history, while the latter points to the external drivers of historical reality. By examining the interplay between these two contexts, this paper seeks to answer how Bloch reinterpreted philosophical traditions to address the dilemmas of his time, thereby constructing the openness of his ontology of 'not-yet-being.'

2.1. The historical lineage context

First is the historical lineage of Bloch's thought. The openness of his ontology of 'not-yet-being' is neither whimsical nor an isolated construct but rather a coherent extension of the open orientation inherent in past philosophical and knowledge systems.

Specifically, the concept of material in Bloch's ontology of 'not-yet-being' is inherited from Aristotle and 'Left Aristotelianism' [5]. In 1952, he published his first major work dedicated to materialism, *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Left* [6]. In this book, Bloch reinterpreted Aristotle's theory of potentiality. Aristotle argued that the true being of a particular thing consists of two levels: the first is matter (hyle), and the second is form (eidos). Matter contains the potential (dynamis) to actualize the true form of a thing, while form transforms this potential into actuality (energeia), resulting in the thing as we perceive it [7].

Based on differing interpretations of the significance and passivity or subjectivity of form and matter, Bloch distinguished between the Aristotelian Right and the Aristotelian Left. The Aristotelian Right emphasizes the externality and even coerciveness of form over matter, asserting that the form of being is determined externally (by God or absolute theocratic-political authority) [6]. In contrast, the Aristotelian Left posits that matter is not a passive collaborator but possesses an active, generative force—human agency can draw out diverse modes of being from matter [6].

This hylomorphic (matter-form) ontology and the open view of matter share significant affinities with Bloch's 'not-yet' concept. He drew upon the Aristotelian Left's focus on the potentiality, possibility, and mutability of existence to refine his own ontology of 'process-incubation-being.' When expounding his ontology of 'not-yet-being,' Bloch employed metaphors akin to those used in his discussion of the Aristotelian Left, notably the 'womb.' He described matter as the 'womb of nature,' while in his ontological discourse, he characterized all worldly existence as the 'womb of nothingness' [8]. The womb, perpetually engaged in cyclical contraction, expansion, and latent readiness, embodies metaphors of gestation and birth, symbolizing openness to the future. Bloch's engagement with this strand of the Aristotelian Left distinctly informed the architecture of his own theory, reflecting his materially grounded and genealogically continuous understanding of the openness of existence.

On the other hand, Bloch's critical perspective on reality originates from Hegel and Marx [5]. Bloch's epistemology was also profoundly influenced by Hegel. In 1962, while serving as a visiting professor at the University of Tübingen, Bloch wrote *Subject-Object: Elucidations on Hegel*, in which he critically engaged with and inherited Hegel's dialectical legacy from a Marxist perspective [9]. Bloch argued that within Hegel's system, on the one hand, even the most minute entities undergo a certain worldview; on the other hand, already-formed entities are neither closed nor finalized [10]. Both aspects are reflected in Bloch's own worldview.

In *The Principle of Hope*, Bloch discussed the utopian potential discovered in many mundane phenomena. For instance, before entering a temple gate, people imagine passing through a certain curtain. He viewed this symbolic curtain as a counterpart to the desire for travel. Moreover, the established custom of this imagined curtain is not a fixed or closed matter—it is connected to a utopia constructed in the 19th century. Bloch also fully affirmed the encyclopedic comprehensiveness of Hegel's system and implemented this encyclopedic approach in his own philosophical works. Indeed, Bloch's description of Hegel's philosophy—'In the dialectical process, what remains unresolved is still open' [10] (p. 3)—closely resembles his own characterization of the world in *The Principle of Hope*, 'Much in the World is still Unclosed' [11] (p. 196).

To be specific, this openness in Hegel's philosophy is achieved through his dialectics. Bloch contended that Hegel's doctrine of Being (Sein) and Nothing (Nichts) in *The Science of Logic* constitutes the essence of his dialectics. In Hegel's dialectics, 'being' itself gives birth to 'nothing' (another metaphor derived from the womb), and in ceaseless motion, 'nothing' exists in a state of tense confrontation. Hegel insisted that a certain spring of impulse is inherently inexhaustible vitality [9]. In this sense, Hegel's dialectics dismantles the traditional closed, static dualistic oppositions and resolves a series of conventional problems arising from the dualism between objective reality independent of humans and subjective reality which is denied of objective status.

Bloch argued that, on this basis, Hegel is a philosopher of process and the first thinker of becoming. Drawing inspiration from Hegel's dialectics, Bloch transformed it into his own ontological system of 'nothing—not-yet—all.' At the core of this system lies 'not-yet-being' (noch-nicht-sein), the perpetual process of transformation between being and nothing. From Hegel, Bloch absorbed this ever-changing state of existence, inheriting this processual, generative conception of being.

Bloch's interpretation of the Hegel-Marx relationship and his somewhat unorthodox reading of Marxism further demonstrate his preoccupation with openness. Building on his characterization of Hegel as a philosopher of process philosophy, Bloch analyzed Marx through the lens of process philosophy. He viewed Marx as representing an inversion of Hegelian philosophy that essentially righted Hegel [12].

Specifically, Bloch criticized the Platonic doctrine of anamnesis present in Hegel's philosophy. This doctrine posits that knowledge is a recollection of the ideas contemplated in the transcendental world before birth. Bloch argued that this perspective constitutes a backward-looking epistemology and ontology that fixes knowledge as closed Forms and predetermines the fate of all

things at their inception. In contrast, he maintained that Marx essentially replaced Hegel's illusory world spirit with the true subject - the laboring people - and applied dialectics to materialist interpretations of nature and history [12]. Thus, in Bloch's interpretation of Marxism, the open application of dialectics extended to what concerned him most: the course of history and the destiny of the world.

Furthermore, Bloch both inherited and advanced Marxism. He proposed the necessity of breaking with all doctrines of anamnesis- severing ties with backward-looking ontology to develop a new Marxist philosophy oriented toward the future. Bloch termed this new philosophy an open system, whose core was his own ontology of 'not-yet-being.' At this point, we can observe how Bloch, following the historical lineage of philosophical openness, attempted to construct his own philosophical system. Drawing inspiration from theories of potentiality, dialectics, and historical materialism, this open system is processual and dynamically generative at the ontological level of individual existence, while being future-oriented in the context of world history.

Yet we inevitably confront another question: If the concept of an open philosophical or knowledge system has always had its lineage, why did Bloch feel compelled to revive and advocate this openness in his era? In truth, it was the historical dilemmas and zeitgeist of the 20th century that propelled Bloch toward his pursuit of openness.

2.2. The epochal background context

Bloch's academic career spanned the entire 20th century - his personal life story was, in a temporal sense, coterminous with the century's history. For German-Jewish intellectuals like him, the 20th century meant persecution and exile; for Western intellectuals generally, it demanded choosing between competing ideologies while confronting the latter half-century's Cold War divisions; for the world at large, it witnessed capitalist expansion and communist experimentation - a century of revolution that for many became equally a century of failure, melancholy and disillusionment. Bloch himself endured repeated persecutions and exiles: fleeing Nazi Germany for Zurich in 1933; spending 1938-1949 in American exile; returning to East Germany in 1949 as a semi-establishment philosopher; before finally seeking political asylum in West Germany when the Berlin Wall's construction shattered his illusions in 1961.

Bloch's fascination with individual potentiality and openness grew from his deep scholarly passion. At just 22 years old, he formulated his seminal concept of the 'not-yet'—an insight that, as scholar Wayne Hudson observes, not only set him apart from other thinkers but became a lifelong theoretical foundation [12] (p. 6). However, his meditation on the world's open-ended destiny responded more urgently to historical imperatives. Faced with successive political crises, the questions of how to defend the future and preserve hope became existentially pressing. As he declared in his philosophical credo, 'Philosophy will have conscience of tomorrow, commitment to the future, knowledge of hope. And the new philosophy...Its consciousness is the openness of danger. [11] (p. 7)'

A lifelong anti-capitalist who demonstrated through panoramic critiques how capitalism constructs a closed, moribund world - sealing Pandora's box as it were - Bloch initially embraced communism as the antithesis to fascism, even viewing the Hitler-Stalin choice as politically unavoidable [12]. This unorthodox Marxist later incorporated messianic hopes from Judaeo-Christian traditions before reaffirming atheism. Throughout, he sought possibilities of emancipation across philosophical systems, ultimately synthesizing his own open framework.

After such a rich, complex and circuitous intellectual journey, Bloch's insistence on an open system represented both hope and possibility - simultaneously a subtle refusal to compromise with reality and an optimism almost anachronistic for his century. Few thinkers before Bloch had so radically and systematically centered 'hope' or 'utopia' as conceptual anchors. This uniqueness stemmed partly from his encyclopedic approach (particularly his panoramic cultural critiques of capitalism) requiring exceptionally diverse frameworks - making him precisely the crossroads where multiple traditions met in turbulent times. But more crucially, Marxism's 20th-century trajectory - its practical trials, setbacks and tests regarding human liberation and historical destiny - rendered hope both a luxury and a lifelong pursuit amid accumulating disillusionment. This constituted the essential background against which Bloch's open system took shape.

3. Openness at the theoretical level: the 'not-yet' concept

The openness of Bloch's 'open system' at the ontological level relies on his concept of 'not-yet-being.' The 'not-yet' concept runs through Bloch's entire academic career. As early as 1907, at the young age of 22, Bloch wrote the manuscript *On the Category Not-Yet*; in 1961, while seeking political asylum in West Germany, he published *Fundamental Questions of Philosophy: Ontology of Not-Yet-Being (Philosophische Grundfragen Zur Ontologie des Noch-Nicht-Seins)*. It can be said that this processual concept of 'not-yet' is a crucial component of his philosophical system.

In German, 'not-yet-being' is 'noch-nicht-seins,' where 'noch' means 'still' or 'yet,' 'nicht' means 'not' or 'non,' and 'seins' means 'being.' The very combination of 'not-yet' with 'being,' which signifies ontology, is itself a paradox. Bloch emphasizes the 'not' state of being. He argues that being does not reside at either pole of 'being' or 'non-being.' He considers traditional dualistic ontology to be rigid and closed, as it rejects contingency and thereby stifles the emergence of possibility [4].

The ontology of 'not-yet-being' should instead be an ontology of 'process-incubation-being.' The 'not' state before being is a process of incubation. In his work *The Principle of Hope*, Bloch states that pure 'not' does not exist—'not' depends on 'being' for

its existence, and thus 'not' is actually 'not-being.' And 'not-being' can be simply understood as 'not-yet-being,' and moreover, it is restless in this state of not-being and being [11]. This incorporates tendency, potentiality, and development into the system of 'not-yet-being' ontology.

In summary, 'not' is not mere nothingness but a kind of lack—specifically, an impulse to escape this state of lack. This impulse to move away from lack makes 'not' represent the driving force of life [8].

In his *Tübingen Introduction to Philosophy*, Bloch summarizes his ontology of 'not-yet-being' with the following formulation: S is not yet P. This demonstrates that the logical expression of being is dynamic and processual. In this ontological formulation, the subject (S) internalizes the possibility of change and continuously exists in a state of change and potential for change. The ideal state is for the subject (S) to eventually become the predicate (P). Bloch writes, 'That predicate (P) must be expressed more and more...growing, becoming definite, until it realizes itself' [8] (p. 221) (translated from German).

However, Bloch's concept of the predicate differs from the fact or truth of natural science. The predicate P is more like a kind of hope. Early in Bloch's career, this hope carried strong messianic overtones, while in his later years, the nature of the predicate shifted from theological salvation to atheism. Some scholars argue that, at this stage, P represents what Marx described as the 'humanization of nature and the naturalization of man'—the true human being [13] (p. 13) (translated from Chinese). Whether in its earlier or later form, S does not simply equal P but becomes P. This process of becoming is a hopeful actualization. Therefore, Bloch's ontology of 'not-yet-being' focuses not only on 'what is' (the predicate) but also on the potential of 'what may become' (the subject)—an open being that carries this potential within itself.

However, what Bloch sought was not merely openness at the level of individual ontology. Through this ontological openness of the individual, he aspired to achieve a higher realization, resonating with his understanding of the world, nature, and even history. Bloch's ontology of 'not-yet-being' applies not only to human existence but also to the grand historical process of the world history. His proposed concept of 'nothing—not-yet—all' depicts what Marx described as the unity of new metaphysics and concrete utopia [3].

As he wrote in *Tübingen Introduction to Philosophy*, 'What already exists in this world is like the womb of nothingness, its forms and shapes tending toward a justified existence in their fundamental tension... This is an unfinished process of the world, a process that has not yet triumphed anywhere' [8] (p. 222) (translated from German). This understanding of world history differs from previous static, idealized conceptions or predictable, calculable scientific systems. The developing history itself, due to its 'not-yet' quality, gains subjectivity and vitality. In his philosophical system, the ideal world is not predetermined or closed but requires human beings to fight with mourning-colored blessings and optimism. This ideal must be explored and courageously created—the 'not-yet' quality both makes this creation possible and serves as its driving force.

The ontology of human 'not-yet-being' leads to the ontology of the world's 'not-yet-being'; human indeterminacy points to the indeterminacy of the world's future; the self-realization of human history points to the self-realization of natural history. As Bloch states, 'True creation is not an established fact, not even a fact of the beginning. It is an attempt on the way forward and a question of the end' [8, p. 242] (translated from German). Unlike the Jewish tradition's predetermined Messiah or Christianity's linear time unfolding from Genesis, Bloch argues that the world's destiny is never prewritten. Any potentiality or tendency must be verified by the world's own fate. His philosophy of hope emphasizes the potential and possibilities of human beings as subjects, which is why he boldly declares at the end of *Tübingen Introduction to Philosophy*, fate can be avoided [8]. Here, 'fate' refers not only to individual destiny but also to that of the world and history itself: neither individuals nor history must inevitably slide into meaningless stillness or nothingness. This is the openness that the ontology of 'not-yet-being' imparts to his philosophy of hope.

Bloch's philosophy of hope is not a castle in the air; his ontology of 'not-yet-being' offers a new perspective for observing and interpreting the world. When individual existence and worldly existence acquire theoretical openness, cultural phenomena in real life take on a different appearance. This is what Slavoj Žižek describes as the 'open cosmos' that Bloch meticulously and systematically elaborates—a universe open to the future, sustained by hope for future redemption, joy, and justice [14].

How, then, does Bloch's ontology of 'not-yet-being' construct such an open universe? And how does he describe this sustaining hope—utopia?

4. The open cosmos—cultural phenomena and utopia

Bloch's 'open system' finds full expression in his analysis of cultural phenomena. He responds to Marx's critique of closed philosophical systems in *Theses on Feuerbach*, 'Philosophers have hitherto only interpreted the world in various ways; the point is to change it.' [15] (p. 5) The ontological system of 'not-yet-being' employs methods for interpreting the world while simultaneously containing possibilities for changing it.

4.1. The level of interpreting the world

At the level of interpretation, Bloch's cultural system does not focus on fixed, lifeless cultural phenomena but on discovering their processual nature and implicit tendencies—understanding them as 'not-yet' existences, as changing, processual, and emergent beings. In Bloch's monumental work *The Principle of Hope*, the third part of Volume One, 'Transition: Wishful Images in the Mirror', presents an extensive study of cultural phenomena that can reveal 'hope'. Bloch examines cultural production and

evolution across diverse domains including commodities (window displays), fairy tales, travel, cinema, dance, and theater. Temporally, his analysis spans from the dance customs of primitive peoples and 10th-century heroic songs to D.W. Griffith's 1920s films and commodity advertisements in the capitalist era [11].

The ontology of 'not-yet-being' organizes cultural phenomena according to the processual, dynamic concept of 'hope,' connecting seemingly isolated cultural phenomena. By focusing on the real dreams utilized and relied upon within cultural phenomena, Bloch manages to partially break free from Eurocentric constraints, paying extraordinary attention to non-class-based, marginalized cultural expressions. He argues that non-western cultural traditions contain the impulse of the 'not-yet' and various forms of hope, thus connecting with the 'western canon.'

In the section 'Better Castles in the Air in Fair and Circus, in Fairytale and Colportage', Bloch discusses myths from *One Thousand and One Nights*, pointing out their primal desires for invincible power and limitless wealth, creating intertextual connections with Grimm's Fairy Tales, Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, and Poe's stories. Going further, Bloch delves into fairy tales as a universal cultural phenomenon, revealing the shared human desires behind them [11].

Bloch contends that fairy tales are not isolated but can be situated within the entire process of industrialization. This doesn't mean fairy tales simply reflect their historical context, but rather that the desires behind them possess historical significance. Bloch writes, 'Fairytale and colportage are castle in the air...It comes in the end from the Golden Age and wants to be in one again, in happiness which penetrates from the night to the light.' [11] (p. 369) However, such reappearance is impossible in bourgeois eyes because industrialized mass production has eroded individual desires, making this naive fantasy of the past unable to reemerge in industrial society. Through this organizational approach, fairy tales from different cultural traditions become connected with social formations and political structures.

The unique interpretive power of the 'not-yet-being' ontological system in cultural analysis can also be glimpsed through the chapter titles in *The Principle of Hope*. For instance, in the section 'The Lure of Travel, Antiquity, Happiness of the Gothic Novel' Bloch interprets three seemingly unrelated cultural phenomena as a whole. Bloch argues they share an intrinsic logical connection as they all embody desires for defamiliarization - the pursuit of the exotic, the ancient (relics), and the foreign. Travel resembles erotic love in its quest for strange and beautiful foreign lands. Tracing back to India's classic *Kamasutra*, he notes how lovers present each other with sublime, special, and extraordinary things - artworks or stars. Bloch observes this romantic reminiscence is 'the memory which is most youthfully, therefore most powerfully surrounded by utopia' [11] (p. 372). Due to their shared desire for defamiliarization and conquest, Bloch connects the cultural practice of travel with biologically-driven erotic impulses.

The same impulse manifests in antique collecting. If ancient Indian lovers presented artworks or stars to their beloveds, antique collectors 'wish to surround itself with what is rare, to have temporally or spatially distant things as a capsule, as it were' [11] (p. 381). They too are travelers - 'turning away from manufactured goods, a turning towards an image of the house that has become irretrievable, that was both the coziest and the most imaginative' [11] (p. 382). Artists similarly grasp exotic treasures, as Bloch writes, 'which makes out of history, mythology, foreign zones its sentimental and curious panorama' [11] (p. 390). Thus, reading adventure novels becomes another form of travel - wandering through Gothic castles or handling ancient unfamiliar pistols both stem from nostalgia for the past. All three practices constitute critiques and escapes from mechanical commodities and lost human vitality.

This encyclopedic interconnectedness characterizes how Bloch's open system interprets the world. The 'not-yet-being' ontology functions like a kaleidoscope - infinitely expandable around hope's central axis, with light refracting through prisms to reveal different faces of similar desires.

4.2. The level of changing the world

Regarding world-changing potential, because Bloch's cultural vision always revolves around utopian impulses, it inherently preserves possibilities for transformation and development. In Bloch's research system, the world itself is constantly changing. Taking cinema as an example, Bloch focuses not on completed films but on various forms of wishes, desires and utopian landscapes: what concerns him is how people are being lured by Hollywood films into imitating false, substitute lifestyles. Films thus act as mediators between past and future, effecting worldly changes. This understanding of the world in Bloch's philosophy of hope finds vivid expression in Chapter 17 of *The Principle of Hope*, titled 'Much in the World is Still Unclosed',

No thing could be altered in accordance with wishes if the world were closed, full of fixed, even perfected facts. Instead of these there are simply processes, i.e. dynamic relationships in which the Become has not completely triumphed. The Real is process; the latter is the widely ramified mediation between present, unfinished past, and above all: possible future. Indeed, everything real passes over into the Possible at its processual Front, and possible is everything that is only partially conditioned, that has not yet been fully or conclusively determined [11] (p. 196).

What is obvious is that Bloch not only maintains the consciousness that the world must be changing but also refuses value neutrality. As the quotation shows, precisely because the world is neither closed nor perfect, things can be 'altered in accordance with wishes' [11] (p. 196). For Bloch, there exists a proper developmental direction - the utopia of true human freedom and liberation. This constitutes his proposed spiritual solution to the 20th century's value and faith crisis.

In the opening of *The Spirit of Utopia*, Bloch writes, 'I am. We are. That is enough. Now we have to begin. Life has been placed in our hands' [16] (p.1). This bears resemblance to Sartre's concept of 'existence precedes essence' in *Existentialism Is a*

Humanism, 'Man first exists: he materializes in the world, encounters himself, and only afterward defines himself' [17] (p.22). Both 'life placed in our hands' and 'afterwards defines himself' establish a link from present to future.

In Bloch's philosophy of hope, traditional actuality has been transformed into not-yet-being. On this processual foundation, utopia serves dual roles: as a force guiding existential transformation, and as the ultimate home awaiting arrival. As Marx wrote in his 1843 correspondence for *Deutsch-Französische Jahrbücher*, 'It will then become evident that the world has long dreamed of possessing something of which it has only to be conscious in order to possess it in reality' [18] (p. 144). If Bloch's depiction of the 'open cosmos' captures this dreaming, his excavation of utopian elements constitutes the process of 'becoming conscious.' Yet the world's enduring dream isn't arbitrary. For Marx, it's the realm of freedom, history's terminus. For Bloch, the vision remains more ambiguous. While initially investing hope in communist revolutionary ideals and retaining messianic impulses from his Jewish heritage, Bloch's ideal world later transitioned toward atheism.

Nevertheless, the 'not-yet-being' ontological system maintains clear attitudes toward changing the world. Certain forms of hope hinder human freedom and liberation, while others demand preservation and pursuit. Bloch's system consistently incorporates value judgments about world-changing. For instance, he views class-based hopes largely as repressive illusions.

Analyzing commodities, Bloch contrasts capitalist advertisements with pre-capitalist ones. The latter represented 'more contented self-importance than a weapon in the acquisitive struggle', exemplified by traditional Beijing shop signs like 'Heavenly Embroidery' or 'Fountain of All Beauty' [11] (p. 344). Modern advertisements, conversely, construct fragile fantasies - selling lifestyles that 'transform every real and possible need into a weakness' [11] (p. 344). Bloch condemns these commodity fantasies as inauthentic, feeble impulses that evaporate post-purchase. His system astutely identifies capitalism's illegitimate dreams while striving to prevent the world's descent into such abyss. Similarly, his film analysis applies this ontological distinction,

This is how far the capitalist cinema has degenerated, consigned to the technology of the war of aggression. A good dream-factory, a camera of dreams which are critically inspiring, overhauling according to a humanistic plan, would have had, had and undoubtedly has other possibilities – and this within reality itself [11] (p. 410).

Bloch condemns Hollywood's dream factories producing cinematic substitutes for living - escapist utopias. Authentic cinema as wish-landscapes and action-landscapes retains deeper expressive potential beyond Hollywood (his specific praise for Soviet films revealing lingering revolutionary sympathies [11]). This recalls Benjamin's *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction*, where cinema appears 'burst this prison-world asunder by the dynamite of the tenth of a second' [19] (p. 24). For Bloch, true cinema isn't escapist nowhere-land but this dynamite - blasting constraints for genuine vital impulses to emerge.

We can thus discern how the ontology of 'not-yet-being' fulfills its mission of transformation and development: this philosophical system demands that while exposing false liberation, people must learn to identify the core of genuine utopia within it. It requires constantly dispersing the fog of various desires to locate the true direction forward. In the third part of *The Principle of Hope*, Bloch further explores whether diverse utopian concepts in cultural phenomena can develop into enlightened impulses of self-realization and liberation. For instance, analyzing the happy ending as a wish-image in popular fiction, he suggests that in socialist society, such happy endings need not remain mere fantasies but could become genuine guides for living. The fourth part, 'Construction: Outlines of a Better World' elaborates active utopian construction across 'Medicine, Social Systems, Technology, Architecture, Geography, Perspective in Art and Wisdom' [20]. This open-ended depiction leaves room for later expansions of his system, as when Zimmermann in 'Turning Utopia into Eutopia' discusses the possibilities for building a true realm of freedom with the emergence of cyberspace [14] (p. 246).

On the macro-world level, Bloch's ontology of 'not-yet-being' offers this open perspective: all things in the world remain open to each other and to past and future. Cultural phenomena flow continuously between desire and illusion, connecting people across vast distances and centuries through shared dreams. As all that is solid melts into air, what emerges are previously overlooked wishes - those vital impulses toward liberation, freedom and happiness [21]. Furthermore, the system affirms this enduring possibility: the world exists, and will always exist, in a state of becoming. The key to destiny lies at existence's core, perpetually within human reach. In this sense, Bloch's system remains profoundly idealistic, true to his philosophy of hope's original intent. Thus, while the ontology of 'not-yet-being' only provides an 'open possibility,' in our era when hope itself has become a luxury, we cannot overlook the preciousness of this potential.

5. Conclusion: revisiting the necessity of 'not-yet'

Today, reconsidering the 'not-yet' carries particular urgency and necessity. The ontological foundation of Bloch's philosophy of hope revolutionizes the very concept of system. By examining his 'not-yet-being' system, we discover that an open philosophical framework can not only more authentically engage non-eurocentric cultural phenomena but also avoid the cognitive violence inflicted by rigid, hermetic systems. Study on Bloch notes that this ontology critiques both rigid binary conceptions of being and the 'human-less' perspective of natural science, while revitalizing Marxism's humanist dimension. Systematically, it expands traditional understandings of systems, significantly developing the concept and possibilities of 'open systems.'

Building on predecessors while contemplating his era, Bloch's philosophy manifests profound ontological tension through its development from 'not-yet' to systematic 'not-yet-being' ontology. This concept reminds us that systemic boundaries are never static. Charting hope's ontological blueprint and constructing systematic extensions for the 'not-yet' allows deeper appreciation of process philosophy's subtleties while strengthening confidence in building our epoch's knowledge systems. The 'open system' largely transcends Western metaphysics' constraints, breaking through rigid cognitive limitations while focusing on humanity's

own liberation and development. The world ceases to be predetermined truth; knowledge systems need not mimic perfection. What matters is no longer extant things but their possibilities, directions and horizons of change. History's coordinates shift from backward-looking to realizing past hopes. Simultaneously, 'open systems' incorporate richer cultural phenomena into discourse. Long excluded by outdated systemic perspectives - particularly non-eurocentric culture within western-centric frameworks - Bloch's excavations of marginal, non-class-based cultures demonstrate that diverse texts contain multiple clues about existence's essence awaiting discovery. These open, expansive clues lead toward futures of freedom and liberation. Open systems bring life to culture; they probe existence's depths while revealing its boundless breadth.

Nearly fifty years after Bloch's death, his thought remains startlingly contemporary. For both his ontological investigations and broader cultural studies, what endures is the timeless concern with 'life' - the vitality of systems and cultures, or existence's essential nature. In this sense, as Žižek observes in the preface to *The Privatization of Hope*, Bloch remains our contemporary [14].

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