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Anticipation as Critique: Objective Phantasy from Ernst Bloch to Günther Anders

This paper aims to interpret the role of “objective phantasy” in the utopian tradition of critical theory, with an emphasis on Bloch, but also the evolution of its usage with authors such as Marcuse and Adorno. The main function of phantasy taken into consideration is its capacity to go beyond present facts (what is made possible by an anti-positivist concept of truth in critical theory) and to *anticipate*. This anticipatory element of phantasy is dependent, as we try to demonstrate, on a reflection of *affects around expectation*. Ultimately, we oppose two models of anticipatory imagination (while showing their inner relation): a utopian one (primarily conceptualized by Bloch) and its counterpoint, catastrophist anticipation, which assumes its most radical form in Günther Anders’ reflections on the atomic age, and whose actuality and urgency we seek to emphasize.

Keywords: Objective Phantasy, Anticipation, Ernst Bloch, Günther Anders

... and there seek the true, the real, where the merely factual disappears.

Bloch, *Spirit of Utopia*

Truth as anticipation

The utopian spirit presupposes a distance towards immediate reality because it desires something that does not exist. Certain authors in the tradition of so-called critical theory have sought to work with a concept of truth and an idea of knowledge that would correspond to the exigence of being *against existing reality*. Such an impulse had something in common with the aesthetic avantgarde, close to expressionism. Hartmut Scheible wrote that the birth of critical theory could be interpreted in light of the *spirit* of expressionism and that Ernst Bloch's *Geist der Utopie* could be called "Philosophy of Expressionism" (Scheible 2012). As Gottfried Benn used to say, "reality is a capitalist concept".¹ Against reality, Bloch stated that a "realism without peace with the existent [*Realistik ohne Frieden mit der Vorhandenheit*]" (Bloch 1985b, 621) was necessary. Against the bad facticity of the present, affirmed and legitimized by positivism (understood in a broader sense), was the political desire to go beyond the force of facts in a way that was not separate from knowledge. In this context, the *imagination* gains epistemological (and political) dignity, because it reaches beyond the "bad present" (*schlechte Gegenwart*) and has an anticipating character which gives a "temporal core" (*Zeitkern*) to the knowing process, as defended by Adorno.

Before we return to the critical function of imagination (or *phantasy*), it is important to note that in the dialectical tradition (into which Bloch and the critical theory are inserted), there is already an emphatic concept of *truth* that is critically related to the "bad present" of facts and also has an anticipating element. As all concepts in Bloch's philosophy are so strictly intertwined, and encircle the problem of utopia, it should come as no surprise that his concept of truth also has a utopian dimension. But what does it mean? Michael Löwy tells us about a conversation he had with Bloch in the 1970s, in which this relation appears:

Among his remarks during our conversation, there is one that struck me and that summarizes the persistent fidelity of an entire life to the idea of utopia:

1 Quoted from Carlos Eduardo Jordão Machado, it affirms that: "Reality meant liberalism, Darwinism, war, historical humiliation, injustice and power, dissolution of nature and history. 'Reality' was, for Benn, a 'demoniacal' concept, it was the reality of scientific rationalization" (Jordão Machado 2016, 15).

“The world as it exists *is not true*. There is a second truth concept which is not positivist, which is not founded on the ascertainment of facticity [...]; but which is charged with value, as for example in the concept “a true friend”, [...] where there is a relation to the moral sphere. And if that doesn't correspond to the facts – and for us, Marxists, facts are only reified moments of a process, and nothing else – in this case, *so much worse for the facts*, would say the old Hegel.” (Löwy 2009, 11)

That Bloch finishes his thought with a quote from Hegel on the utopian character of truth according to which the world is *false*, is no coincidence. The Hegelian concept of truth played a decisive role in dialectical theory as a critical concept that could point out the *falsity* (and not only the injustice) of existing reality (going beyond the definition of propositional truth, which is, for Hegel, mere “correctness” [*Richtigkeit*]).² It is no wonder that the interpretation of this concept is emphasized in *Reason and Revolution*, Marcuse's study on Hegel, as well as in Adorno's *Three studies on Hegel*.³ But what then is Hegel's concept of truth? If it's possible to explain it briefly, it is *not* the traditional conception of truth as the accordance of a judgment to an actual state of things, as it is in the tradition of truth as *adaequatio intellectus et rei*. Truth for Hegel is not the correctness of knowledge (*Richtigkeit des Wissens*), because truth is “not an attribute of thought, but of reality in process” (Marcuse 1941, 25). Also, Bloch (1963), in his *Tübingen Einleitung*, differentiates correctness as mere formal truth and a truth of content. This distinction is quite clear in Hegel's *Encyclopedia*:

By truth, one understands at first that I *know* how something is. Yet this is truth only in relation to consciousness or the formal truth, mere correctness. In contrast to this, truth in the deeper sense consists in this, that objectivity is identical with the concept. It is truth in this deeper sense that is at stake if, for example, one is speaking of a *true* state or of a *true* work of art. These objects [*Gegenstände*] are true if they are what they *should* be, that is to say, if their reality corresponds to their concept. (Hegel 2010a, 284)

2 However, the Habermasian and post-Habermasian tradition of critical theory abandoned this concept. As Habermas says, one of the “three errors” of the old critical theorists was that their Hegelian concept of truth was “incompatible with scientific work” (Habermas 2015, 247-8). The other two were their “disdain towards bourgeois democracy” and a problem in its “normative basis” (Habermas 1985, 171-172).

3 Adorno also approaches Hegel's concept of truth in the sense that we are discussing here in his lectures *Einführung in die Dialektik*.

As Bloch says, truth must be an “intervening picture of the tendencies-latencies” [...] (Bloch 1985a, 250).

Yet, such an accordance of an object with its own concept is actualized only in the becoming, as a result of a process: truth is not the “notion” (*Begriff*) in contrast to the falsehood of the object, but truth emerges in its processual contradiction and is not, therefore, *static* (it is different from Kant’s *idea*, which has a regulative function). This is the sense behind what Adorno said about the “temporal core of truth”. Under this aspect, Hegel’s concept of truth already contains something anticipatory, as it necessarily pushes beyond the pure present in its processual character. Truth does not have a character of timelessness and eternity. Instead, it carries in itself the historical process and, as such, is neither apart from the future nor the past, as for Hegel, truth is the *result*. As Bloch says, truth must be an “intervening picture of the tendencies-latencies” [*eingreifende Abbildung der Tendenzen - Latenzen*] (Bloch 1985a, 250). It is then *eingreifend*, it intervenes, so it is not contemplative but has a performative force: it stresses what is present as tendencies, what is *not yet* actualized. To avoid confusion, it is important to say that Hegel’s concept of truth is *not* a positive anticipation of future phenomena, but it *pushes* towards the future as it is anchored in contradiction and becoming (*Werden*). The truth of something, as this *propelling beyond itself*, is derived from the thing’s own negativity. This becomes clear when Hegel explains what finitude is in his *Science of Logic*: “Finite things are, but in their reference to themselves they refer to themselves negatively – in this very self-reference they propel themselves beyond themselves, beyond their being. They are, but the truth of this being is [...] their end” (Hegel 2010b, 101). The “not being in peace with the existent,” to which Bloch referred to, is not something merely subjective, but we could say that in the dialectical comprehension of the world, *the existent is not at peace with itself*. Its own immanent negativity produces the processuality of truth. As Hegel writes in the *Phenomenology of Spirit*, “the truth is the bacchanalian revel where not a member is sober [...]” (Hegel 2018, 29).

Imagination and expectating affects

The idea of a “realism without peace with the existent” could be the synthesis of the idea of critical theory that should be “realistic” and *against* reality; that is, critical theory should refer objectively to reality, but without *accepting* this reality. As affirmed before, this *pointing out beyond existing reality* cannot be solely subjective, but strives to be objectively grounded (although we could also say that the subjective desire

for transformation already contains the objective moment, “for suffering is objectivity that weighs upon the subject; its most subjective experience [...] is objectively conveyed” [Adorno 2007, 18]). In the dialectical tradition, especially stressed by Bloch, there is a relation between anticipation and immanent critique, so that in opposition to an “abstract” character of an anticipating image, Bloch aims at a *concrete* anticipation. As Rehmann explains it: “In Bloch, especially in *The Principle of Hope*, anticipation assumes the position of a basic anthropological concept. As a subjective correlate of a “not-yet-become” [*Noch-Nicht-Gewordenen*] in the social reality, it designates the general human capacity to anticipate [*vorwegnehmen*] something of the future, to “intend” [*vor-zu-haben*] for it” (Rehmann 2012, 3).

The main point is to show how the subjective anticipatory desire and the objective tendency of the world can be associated. While in Hegel this element of anticipation can be accessed solely through rational knowledge, in Bloch (and in the utopian tradition of critical theory) this relation between the “not yet being” and the bad present occurs in a specific faculty that can anticipate: phantasy (or imagination, which often appears as a synonym). As is known, this was also one of Bloch’s main concepts in his philosophy of concrete utopia. However, that phantasy had to be, as he says, an “objective”, or “exact phantasy” (as also employed by Benjamin and Adorno): adjectives that seem to create a paradox between the arbitrariness of subjective desire and the demand for exactitude or objectivity. The non-utopian version of it is employed in an example by Habermas when he states that “institutional phantasy” (Habermas 1995, 80) is needed to create solutions for the institutionalization of the media (Honneth also used this term in a radio interview to refer to the management of the refugee problem). In this case, going beyond existing reality is already out of question (and we could ask whether in the “institutional phantasy” we can still find a drop of imagination that is not the pure reproduction of existing reality...).

How can phantasy then satisfy this demand for critical knowledge, as something that connects presence and absence, present and future, *Sein* and *Sollen*? As Marcuse puts it, closer to the realm of desire, phantasy “remains free from the rule of the reality principle” and “stays committed to the pleasure principle” (Marcuse 1974, 14). As such, in the same way that “Marxism rescued the rational core of utopia” (Bloch 1996, 141), there is a truth moment in phantasy that expresses the rational aspect of the irrational, a promise contained in the suffering of unfulfilled desires (as Adorno said in his *Negative Dialectics*, “to lend a voice to suffering is a condition of all truth” [Adorno 2007, 17-18]):

Phantasy is cognitive in so far as it preserves the truth of the Great Refusal, or, positively, in so far as it protects, against all reason, the aspiration for the integral fulfillment of man and nature which are repressed by reason. In the realm of phantasy, the unreasonable images of freedom become rational, and the 'lower depth' of instinctual gratification assumes a new dignity. (Marcuse 1974, 160, emphasis added)

Bloch's *Principle of Hope* could be read, generally speaking, as a theory of expectating affects, in which the anticipatory⁴ element is present. Hope is doubtlessly central, but in Bloch's "system" (despite the fragmentary character of his writings, his philosophy *does* have a systematic dimension) the capacity to hope is dependent on the imagination. But the materialist moment of this theory (if we understand materialism in a broader than usual sense)⁵ is that these expectating affects are all intertwined with the instinctual dimension (often related to Freud's theory of drives), as can be noted in Marcuse's and Adorno's approaches. In the case of Bloch, the anticipation is intertwined with a theory of *hunger*. In an interesting (but maybe questionable) way, he tries to substitute Freud's concept of the *libido* for one of hunger, which he considers to be a "lower" drive related to the instinct of self-preservation. "Hunger, the main drive, must be worked out here, and the way it proceeds to the rejection of deprivation, that is, to the most important expectant emotion: hope" (Bloch 1996, 11). This pointing beyond the present is something objectively anchored in concrete individuals: "The stomach is the first lamp into which oil must be poured. Its longing is precise, its drive is so unavoidable that it cannot even be repressed for long" (Bloch 1996, 65). The drives push the phantasy towards the future (as a negation of the bad present) and are transformed in "*revolutionary interest*":

Hunger cannot help continually renewing itself. But if it increases uninterrupted, satisfied by no certain bread, then it suddenly changes. The body-ego then becomes rebellious, does not go out in search of food merely within the old framework. It seeks to change the situation which has caused its empty stomach, its hanging head. The No to the bad situation which exists, the Yes to the better

4 Here I should make a linguistic note: in English, anticipation may eventually be used as a synonym for expectation, which is not exactly the case for German and other Latin languages. Surely there is a narrow connection, but here I use the word "anticipation" (and the adjective "anticipatory") in the sense of *vorwegnehmen*, while "expectation" is rather closer to *Erwartung and Hoffnung*.

5 That is, not as orthodox Marxism of the *Diamat* understands it.

life that hovers ahead, is incorporated by the deprived into *revolutionary interest*. (Bloch 1996, 75)

It is not fortuitous that one of Marcuse's main concerns in his reflections on late industrial society and the developments of the post-war *Welfare State* was the repressive satisfaction of needs, which squelched the subjective desire for transformation and produced, to say it briefly, conformism.⁶ Likewise, Günther Anders speaks of a "lack of lack [*Mangel an Mangel*]" of a society in which "*everything is present*" (Anders 2003, 119). It is important to note that in opposition to Marcuse's and Anders' pessimistic views on the historical changes that restrain the possibilities of social transformation, for Bloch, the disappearance of the "lack" and of the utopian desire is not thematized, as utopian hope acquires in his work an anthropological ground (in the sense of Adorno's critique that hope could not be a *principle*).⁷ These historical transformations were also pointed out in the *Dialectics of Enlightenment* in which the atrophy of phantasy⁸ was analyzed as a form of social domination and as a regression of intelligence. In this sense, *stupidity* (which according to Adorno and Horkheimer, carries the wounds of domination and violence)⁹ was seen as the inability to go beyond the immediate facticity, to *anticipate*, to imagine the *not yet*. At the same time, it was also against the "clever people" that thought using the most rational arguments that "fascism was impossible in the West" (and were unable to *imagine and anticipate* the worst), that Adorno and Horkheimer wrote that "one of the lessons of the Hitler period is the stupidity of cleverness" (Adorno and Horkheimer 2002, 173). Already in the preface of the book, they affirm that

6 As Hans Jürgen Krahl synthesizes: "At the center of Marcuse's theory of revolution is the question: how can the necessity for emancipation be developed under the conditions of a repressive satisfaction of the elementary material necessities? How can the necessities for a kingdom of freedom, peace and happiness enter the consciousness of the masses and push forwards to a political phenomenon, if they are not anchored anymore in the material vital necessities for the abolition of hunger, material misery and physical suffering?" (Krahl 1971, 304).

7 However, although Marcuse had a radical pessimistic interpretation of the transformations of contemporary capitalism, he was still much closer than Anders and Adorno to Bloch's conception of the instinctual irreducibility of the utopian desire.

8 "Fantasy withers" (Adorno and Horkheimer 2002, 28).

9 "Stupidity is a scar. It can relate to one faculty among many or to them all, practical and mental. Every partial stupidity in a human being marks a spot where the awakening play of muscles has been inhibited instead of fostered" (Adorno and Horkheimer 2002, 214).

In Adorno's understanding of the new functioning of ideology, the deceit was not a false appearance that would "cover" true reality: rather, the *facts* in themselves and their crude reduplication in conscience were ideological (so that, as he analyzes in his *Minima Moralia*, cynicism becomes structural).

"the blocking of theoretical imagination has paved the way for political delusion" (Adorno and Horkheimer 2002, xvi).

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In order to retain what is not yet present as a goal in the present, phantasy is required. The essential connection of phantasy with philosophy is evident from the function attributed to it by philosophers, especially Aristotle and Kant, under the title of 'imagination'. Owing to its unique capacity to 'intuit' an object though the latter be not present and to create something new out of given material of cognition, imagination denotes a considerable degree of independence from the given, of freedom amid a world of unfreedom. In surpassing what is present, it can anticipate the future. [...] Without phantasy, all philosophical knowledge remains in the grip of the present or the past and severed from the future, which is the only link between philosophy and the real history of mankind. (Marcuse 2009, 114)

Phantasy then gives cognitive character to the wish for something better, for something not yet existent: the *future* receives truth character.¹⁰ This could be highlighted as one of the main characteristics of critical theory, inasmuch as (in the words of Horkheimer) "truth depends on our will, on action. Willing, knowing, and acting are not bricks that can be piled up arbitrarily, but they depend upon each other" (Horkheimer 1988, 209). Such an intimate relation between imagination and desire, very clear in Marcuse's *Eros and Civilization*, appears in a quite similar manner in Bloch's *The Principle of Hope*:

[...] wishing arises, if not actually out of imagined ideas, then only together with them. At the same time it is further stimulated by them to the same degree that

10 "The truth value of imagination relates not only to the past but also to the future: the forms of freedom and happiness which it invokes claim to deliver the historical *reality*" (Marcuse 1974, 148-9).

what is pictured, pictured ahead, promises fulfilment. Thus where there is the imagined idea of something better, ultimately perhaps perfect, wishing takes place, possibly impatient, demanding wishing. The mere imagined idea thus becomes a wishful image, stamped with the cachet: this is how *it should be*. (Bloch, 1996, p. 46)

This “how it should be” of wishing that arises with imagination is in tension with reality, but it cannot be completely detached from it – as per the Hegelian motto, “no *Sollen* without *Sein*”. In this case, phantasy operates as a kind of immanent critique, and not a transcendent, abstract, purely moralistic critique. Phantasy for Bloch is not the pejorative *Phantasterei*, in the sense of what is criticized as an abstract utopia of a strictly subjective act of thought that is completely apart from existing reality, as a freestanding criteria used to judge the world, but is something at the same time *grounded in reality*: that’s why for Bloch it is not only necessary as an anti-positivistic concept of truth, but also as “a new concept of reality”:

the concrete imagination and the imagery of its mediated anticipations are fermenting in the process of the real itself and are depicted in the concrete forward dream; anticipating elements are a component of reality itself. Thus the will towards utopia is entirely compatible with object-based tendency, in fact is confirmed and at home within it. (Bloch 1996, 197)

Utopian and catastrophist anticipation

In many aspects, we can bring together Bloch’s considerations on phantasy (as expositied above) and those brought about by authors of the Frankfurt school such as Adorno, Horkheimer and Marcuse. But Bloch’s certainty that there is an objective correlate to the concrete imagination “fermenting in the process of the real” can no longer be affirmed by those authors. Their “pessimism” is anchored in a diagnosis of time that is attentive to the historical transformations of the 20th century, while in Bloch it may be possible to say that there is nothing like a “diagnosis of time”, but rather an ontology, or a philosophical anthropology of hope, which risks becoming indifferent to historical change. This “object-based tendency” towards utopia is somehow also the quintessence of an optimistic philosophy of history present in Hegel and in the young Marx, where the realization of freedom appears as the truth of history, something to which the historical process, moved by its internal contradictions, will conduct humanity. “The world-process itself is a utopian

function, with the matter of the objectively Possible as its substance” (Bloch 1996, 177). The faith in the “world-process” is exactly what cannot be defended anymore, as it risks becoming a sign of historical blindness. The age of catastrophic events that achieved its highest point with the Nazi apocalypse and the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki (which are not to be read as *accidents* of the historical process) inaugurated a new era and inverted this historical necessity as “a new world time” of diminishing expectations, as per Paulo Arantes.¹¹ Carl Schmitt said that Hegel died in 1933¹². In a way, the Frankfurtian intellectual experience could be said to be a reflection of this statement. (Heidegger, on the contrary, in a much more radically apologetic manner, responded to Schmitt by stating that Hegel did not die on the 30th january 1933 – on that date he would have “just started to live”)¹³. Adorno, in one of his aphorisms in *Minima Moralia*, conceived fascism not as a contingent event in world history, but as something that reveals its inner sense:

Had Hegel’s philosophy of history embraced this age, Hitler’s robot-bombs would have found their place beside the early death of Alexander and similar images, as one of the selected empirical facts by which the state of the world-spirit manifests itself directly in symbols. Like Fascism itself, the robots career without a subject. Like it they combine utmost technical perfection with total blindness. And like it they arouse mortal terror and are wholly futile. ‘I have seen the world spirit’, not on horseback, but on wings and without a head, and that refutes, at the same stroke, Hegel’s philosophy of history. (Adorno 2005, 55)

The world-process reveals itself rather as a *dystopian* function: that is why the sense of the Revolution for Walter Benjamin (and I would say also for Adorno) is no longer the same as for Marx, as something that is brought about by the objective conditions of the historical process as historical destiny, but is rather something that must go *against* the world-process; it is an “emergency brake” that must stop the historical

11 For a diagnosis of a change in the historical experience and its temporal structure (based in Koselleck’s categories), see Arantes’ *O novo tempo do mundo* (Arantes 2014).

12 This anecdote is explained by Jean-François Kervégan (2011) in his study on Carl Schmitt.

13 These notes are from a seminar on Hegel’s concept of state that Heidegger gave in the winter semester of 1934/35. I reproduce them here in the original so the reader can judge it by himself: “Am 30. 1. 33 ist ‘Hegel gestorben’ – nein! Er hat noch gar nicht ‘gelebt’! – da ist er erst *lebendig* geworden [...]” (Heidegger 2011, 85)

tendencies that are pushing humanity towards the abyss. *Progress* is not something to be affirmed, but to be stopped. In his fragment “Fire Alarm” from *One-way Street*, Benjamin writes: “Before the spark reaches the dynamite, the lighted fuse must be cut” (Benjamin 1972, 122). This is radical anticipation and future-oriented thought, but also an inversion of Bloch: what is anticipated is not the *summum bonum*, but the catastrophe, and what is anticipated is not to be realized, but to be negated. The enunciation of the future in this anticipatory thought (as in the tradition of the “prophetic intellectuals”) has a performative character, here both in the utopian and in the catastrophic sense. The utopian anticipation desires to force reality towards the future: the future must become present. But the catastrophic anticipation, the other side of eschatological thought, announces the future in order to *avoid it* (this is what Günther Anders called “prophylactic catastrophism” [Anders 2009, 179]). This negative relation towards the future can become blackmail in a situation in which we cannot exit the bad present. This is certainly a form of living the *urgency*, but catastrophic anticipation in Benjamin (and in Anders) should be understood as the need for urgent transformation of the present, and not the maintenance of the situation in which we are stuck as a perpetual avoidance of the future. But it is relevant to note that in both forms of relation to the future (utopianism and catastrophism), the anticipation occurs as an *exaggeration* of present tendencies. The main point is not the correctness of a “prediction” of future events, but rather to point out how the future is lived in the present,¹⁴ that is, how the present carries anticipating moments: objectively and subjectively.

A clearer counterpoint to Bloch than Benjamin is Günther Anders, who was not exactly in the Frankfurter circle and who was known to be the “alarmist” philosopher of the nuclear apocalypse. He radically inverts Bloch’s categories, and although he criticizes Blochian hope sharply and directly, does not simply abandon Bloch, but actualizes his philosophy through its inversion, in what we could call a *sublation* of hope. Already the title of his book on the atomic age (*Endzeit und Zeitenende*, Time of End and End of Times) ironically (or tragically?) inverts Bloch’s con-

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14 In the phenomenological tradition, an analysis of future as “lived time” independent of a *knowledge* of the future, but in the everyday experience of trying to foresee it, was done by Eugene Minkowski (1970), that cannot be adequately approached in this text. But he distinguishes a positive and projective relation to future as *activity*, and a negative (and passive one), defined as “expectation”, in which “we live time in an inverse sense; we see the future come toward us and wait for that (expected) future to become present” (Minkowski 1970, 88).

cepts of *Wendezeit* and *Zeitenwende* (time of changes and change of times). The technical development that led to the real possibility of humanity's annihilation (that concurrently signifies for Anders, the "annihilation of our possibilities") changed the anthropological foundations of utopia as analyzed by Bloch.¹⁵ This ambiguous relation of Anders to Bloch as it appears in his writings ranges from love and admiration – he dedicated one of his books to him – to indignation, accusing Bloch of historical blindness and of being a "*professionelle Hoffer* [...], who would not let himself be frightened or disappointed by Auschwitz or Hiroshima" (Anders 2013, 452). Anders' critique of Bloch was based on a diagnosis of time that gained a certain metaphysical character. There is a radical difference between the world before and after 1945: the "atomic age" is not an age that will be surpassed, but is the *last age*. In this sense, this age is a *reprieve* (*Frist*):

The epoch of changing epochs no longer exists after 1945. Now we live in an era that is no longer one epoch that precedes others, but rather a reprieve, during which our existence is endlessly nothing but a "barely-still-existing". The obsolescence of Ernst Bloch, who resisted even taking the event of Hiroshima into consideration, consisted in his faith — which almost amounted to indolence — in the idea that we are still living in a "not yet", that is, in a "pre-history", one that precedes the authentic one. He could not, even for one minute, be motivated to lose hope (Anders 2013, 20).

Later on, he would even state: "Hope is just another word for cowardliness" (Anders 1987). Anders writes this in a context in which he pleads for political violence and civil disobedience in a state of things where there is nothing to hope for, where hope means nothing but pure inertia. If Bloch saw hope as a form of "*militanter Optimismus*", Anders sees it as expression of conformism, as the incapacity to despair, as gutlessness. As a response to Anders' provocative political despair, two young men wrote:

Do not take away our Bloch, Günther Anders! Our belletristic embellished hope. [...] Bloch cannot be saved anymore; we know. And yet we need him as a life spirit and '*Atemgeber*', because we still have – hopefully – a life ahead of us, we are only 35 years old, and not already 85. (Anders 1987, 52)

15 This anthropological transformation of the technological era, that could be resumed in the idea of the gap (*Gefälle*) between that what we can imagine and that what we can produce, is the object of his *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen*.

But, like for Bloch, phantasy has a crucial cognitive (and political) dimension for Anders as well. “The decisive moral task today”, writes Anders, is the “expansion of the moral phantasy” (*Ausdehnung moralischer Phantasie*) (Anders 2010, 273). Although, if for Bloch phantasy has a utopian function in the sense of an anthropological constant, in Anders’ anthropology of the atomic age we have become “*inverted utopians*”, in a sense that reality went beyond our capacity of imagination:

So this is the basic dilemma of our age: *we are smaller than ourselves*, that is, we are unable to make an image of that which we have made. In this sense we are *inverted utopians*: while utopians are those who can’t produce what they imagine, we cannot imagine that what we produce. (Anders 2003, 96)

This is the reason for Anders’ affirmation that “phantasy is realistic”: anticipation and objective phantasy are a form of exaggeration, an *Über-treiben* of reality’s own tendencies (and, as Adorno says, exaggeration, the loss of measure, is essential to dialectics)¹⁶. But, for Anders, reality itself is exaggerated: the atomic bomb, the murder of millions, the technical possibility of exterminating humanity is an objective exaggeration: “The phantastic and the real are mixed up” (Anders 2013, 331). In this sense, we need phantasy and anticipatory thought to understand not the future, but the *present*, because reality has anticipated itself and went beyond us. We have become unable, with our lack of phantasy, to cognitively understand present reality and to react morally to it. The exaggerated language of the apocalyptic prophet is an attempt to make an adequate image of present reality, or the exaggeration is the evidence that the idea of an “adequate image” has grown old (and that truth is necessarily *emphatic truth*, as exposed at the beginning of this text). The bomb, as a simple object that doesn’t show off its own potentiality and that becomes “understated” (*untertrieben*), is an object that cannot be simply *described* – its image is already a minimization. In this regard, Anders claims that “trivialized objects require exaggerating [*übertreibende*] formulations” (Anders 2010, 235). But with his anticipating exaggeration, Anders again inverts Bloch, for whom “the exaggeration and fantasizing represent a significant pre-appearance, circulating in turbulent existence itself, of what is real” (Bloch 1996, 214-215). In relation to aesthetics, Bloch also defends that “in great art, exaggeration and fantasizing are most visibly applied to tendential consistency and concrete

16 See Adorno’s aphorism “How sickly seem all growing things” in his *Minima Moralia* (Adorno 2005, 71).

utopia” (Bloch 1996, 216). The utopian exaggeration in art expresses for Bloch a tendency in existing reality.

If for Bloch one needs to “learn to wait” (Bloch 1996, 21), for Anders *patience* cannot be considered to be a virtue anymore, as in a similar way to Benjamin, he thinks in terms of *emergency*. Without any positive image of the future, we become “prisoners of the present” (Anders 2003, 120). Having in mind Bloch’s philosophy of hope, we should remember that for Spinoza, there is a complementarity between hope and *fear* (Spinoza, 1996). That is, to hope that something good will happen also means that this good might not come, and to fear that something bad will happen is to concurrently hope that this bad might not occur. In both cases, the relation with temporality is that of *expectation* (and *images*, which are also at the heart of Spinoza’s argumentation). Against these expectating affects, Spinoza would plea for freedom in *securitas*. Lacan once said that “a life without hope is a life without fear” (Safatle 2016, 137). That is, from a Lacanian standpoint (based on Spinoza’s considerations), there is a pathological element in anticipation (in hope and fear), which is lived necessarily as an anxiety that blocks the experience of the present. In this regard, the loss of hope is seen as a gain (in a similar way as in Anders). But one should not be unjust to Bloch and play against him this critique of hope as a passive position of the subject, in which living the future (anticipating) means a blockage of the experience of the present. On the contrary: the instant (*Augenblick*) is at the core of Bloch’s reflections in *The Principle of Hope*, where he writes, for example, that “extraordinary men of action seem to offer genuine *Carpe diem*, as decision at the required moment, as power not to miss its opportunity” (Bloch 1996, 294).

But even if we acknowledge this complementarity of hope and fear, as demonstrated by Spinoza, it is pertinent to note that Anders does not simply plea for a life without anxiety/fear (*Angst*) in his critique of hope. We can say that he maintains a fidelity to Blochian hope and utopian anticipation, but through its inversion in *Angst*:

Nothing is more wrong than the popular saying of the half-educated, that we already live in the “age of fear [*Zeitalter der Angst*]”. This is spoken into us by the journalistic Fellow-Travelers of those who fear that we muster up the true fear, the fear that is adequate to the danger. Rather, we live in the *Age of Trivialization and of Incapacity to Fear*. The commandment [*Gebot*] to expand our imagination means specifically: we have to expand our fear. Postulate: *Do not be afraid of fear, have courage to fear. And also the courage to scare* [*Angst zu machen*]. *Scare your neighbors as yourself* [*Ängstige deinen Nachbarn wie dich*].

selbst]. – Certainly, this our fear must be of a very special kind. 1. A fearless fear [*furchtlose Angst*], since it excludes all fear of those who could mock of us as fraidy-cats. 2. An invigorating fear [*belebende Angst*], because it must throw us into the streets instead of under our beds. 3. A loving fear [*liebende Angst*], that should fear *for* the world, and not just fear that what might happen to us. (Anders 2003, 98)

Fear is not only identical to hope (as its negative). Anders elaborates a dialectics of fear and *courage*, so that we can affirm that *without fear there is no courage*. Marx was aware of this dialectic when he wrote in the introduction to the *Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right* that “the nation must be taught to be *terrified* of itself, in order to give it *courage*” (Marx 1987, 56). Hopelessness as fear does not mean resignation in the present and, as the dialectical contrary of hope, is opposed to apathy, which means nothing other than a lack of imagination.

Conclusion

The practical force of theory is essential to the idea of critical theory, and as we tried to demonstrate, Bloch (and other authors in the tradition of the Frankfurt school) provided this force with a concept of truth that pushes thought beyond the present facts, a force taken from the negativity of the false. This pulsation of the negative in the present points to the future and acquires an anticipatory dimension. This pushing forward is, for Bloch (and also for Marcuse and Adorno), often tied to the drives (to *hunger*, as developed in *The Principle of Hope*) and to the realm of desire. What gives cognitive character for the desire for the better, projected in future, is *phantasy*, which appears as the specific faculty that can *anticipate*. In addition, the intertwining of the theoretical and the practical moments is at the core of the idea of critical theory, the “objective phantasy” is a privileged form of a “realism that is not in peace with reality”, putting cognition and desire together. Phantasy *exaggerates precisely* what is present as tendency, so that the *future* gains relevance in theory and in political practice.

The actuality of anticipatory thought may no longer reside in a utopian “dreaming forwards”, but in its exact contrary: in the *catastrophic* anticipation. The optimistic conception of history that underlies Bloch's philosophy of utopia cannot be sustained anymore, as pointed out by Adorno and Horkheimer, and especially by Günther Anders. However,

Hopelessness as fear doesn't mean resignation in the present and, as the dialectical contrary of hope, is opposed to apathy, which means nothing other than a lack of imagination.

even if the future is eclipsed, Blochian *objective phantasy* is to be saved, even if it needs to be turned upside down. Because theoretical anticipation in imagination, moved whether by hope or *Angst*, needs to become practical anticipation (that for Bloch meant nothing else but the Revolution), that requires *courage*: before the explosion, “the lighted fuse must be cut.”

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Tytuł: Antycypacja jako krytyka: obiektywna fantazja od Ernsta Blocha do Günthera Andersa

Abstrakt: Celem artykułu jest interpretacja roli, jaką w tradycji teorii krytycznej pełni „obiektywna fantazja”, ze szczególnym uwzględnieniem myśli Ernsta Blocha, jak również interpretacja ewolucji użytku, jaki z tej kategorii czynią autorzy tacy jak Marcuse czy Adorno. Naczelną rozważaną funkcją fantazji jest jej zdolność do wykraczania poza obecny stan rzeczy (co umożliwia antypozytywistyczna koncepcja prawdy w ramach teorii krytycznej) oraz do *antycypacji*. Ten antycypacyjny aspekt fantazji zależy, jak próbujemy wykazać, od refleksji na temat *afektów związanych z wyczekiwaniem*. W końcu, w artykule przeciwstawione zostają dwa modele antycypacyjnej wyobraźni (wykazuje się też ich wzajemne powiązanie): model utopijny (formułowany przede wszystkim przez Blocha) oraz jego przeciwieństwo – antycypacja katastroficzna, która przyjmuje swoją najbardziej radykalną formę w rozważaniach Günthera Andersa na temat ery atomowej oraz której palącą aktualność staramy się podkreślić.

Słowa kluczowe: obiektywna fantazja, antycypacja, Ernst Bloch, Günther Anders