Transcendence of the Negative: Günther Anders' Apocalyptic Phenomenology

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Abstract: When the apocalyptic is marginalized, not only is theology under threat of malpractice, but phenomenology is also, for at the core of apocalyptic thinking is the attempt to restrain the totalities that are at work implicitly in our social imaginaries. Most totalities are subtle, appearing even in efforts of unification through global peace. One might extract such insight from Günther Anders, who depicts an immanent, apocalyptic reality beyond the pale of bourgeois optimism and the theological imaginaries that enervate it. We have fallen out of imaginative touch with our everyday activities, and this has resulted in an apocalyptic blindness (Apokalypse-Blindheit) and optimism rooted in abstraction. Such blindness has degraded our "conscience" into "conscientiousness" to the point that even the Hiroshima bomber can abstract from his actions and be exempted easily from responsibility. Although a kind of phenomenologist, Anders criticized colleagues who, in the name of "presuppositionlessness" and observation, could abstract their thoughts far from the reality in which they lived and acted. This paper provides a general introduction to Anders' work and interprets his "Transcendence of the Negative" in order to demonstrate the values of "apocalyptic phenomenology" today. Anders extends a Levinasian eschatology of anticipation (which is precisely of that which one cannot "expect") and demonstrates how transcendence, which typically is understood only in its positive element, also holds the capacity for turning a blind eye to the negative sociality of action. This transcendence often fuels a false optimism for an order of global peace and oneness, which inherently brings about an apocalyptic age, for it ends at "one" and eliminates any "outside". Apocalyptic phenomenology can be one way to disrupt this tendency of blind abstraction by attending to "unveiling" (apokalypsis) itself, attuning our "conscience" to the level of concern proportionate to the threats that stand before it, and becoming "restrainers" of what Anders calls "annihilism.

Keywords: Günther Anders; apocalypse; transcendence; phenomenology; theology

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> "*God is not nice.*
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> *God is not Uncle.*
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> *God is an earthquake.*"—*Gillian Rose* (Rose 1998)

> "*Apocalyptic is the Mother of all Christian Theology—Since we cannot really class the preaching of Jesus as Theology.*" *Ernst Käsemann* (Käsemann 1969; Käsemann 1960, p. 180)

The enigma of the so-called "one world order" to which Revelation 13 refers often, is overlooked in favour of the bombastic destruction and annihilation that typically qualifies our understanding of the "apocalyptic". The latter doom-and-gloom prophecy also has been depicted in more "secular" terms, ranging from Mary Shelly's *The Last Man* (1826), H.G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds* (1898), to Robert Oppenheimer's depiction (1957) of our "atomic" age as one "where the possibility of an

apocalypse is omnipresent".[1] Yet perhaps even more destructive than the bombs themselves are the intersocial changes the bombs communicate and spawn. The nuclear stand-off that has hung like a mushroom cloud over the world since the 1960s has been credited often for bringing peace, or at the very least the lack of conflict; an "unproblematicity" as Patocka might have referred to it. Indeed, as Revelation 13:7 warns, the apocalypse hinges on order, not simply chaos. Those who hold power and "authority over every tribe, people, language and nation" are capable of wielding peace like a sword. Our contemporary contexts of this sort of "peace" are driven by deep networks of demands for capital and its technological interfaces of commodification. The demands to avoid conflict and violence, no matter the *cost*, have birthed a disarray that makes global society swoon and sway, thus calling for reflection upon the apocalyptic in a new way.

One thinker who was able to go beyond the aforementioned one-dimensional understanding of the apocalyptic as merely bombastic was Günther Anders, an influential yet often overlooked 20th century German thinker whose Jewish background pushed him into hiding. Originally Günther Stern, and under the recommendation of a newspaper editor to have a name that is not so "Jewish" but something *anders* or "different", he thus parodied this recommendation and became Günther Anders. Naturally, the context of early 20th century Germany pushed him towards an "apocalyptic" thinking that sought to be a reminder of the constant being-under-threat of what he called the "Nothing will have been".[2] Often blunt and bleak, he depicts an effective reality beyond the pale of bourgeois Western optimism and its ensuing theological imaginaries that enervate the contemporary condition of humankind as out of imaginative touch with his everyday activities. For Anders, after Hiroshima, contemporary Western societies have operated with a fundamentally new understanding of time itself. We are living at a speed like never before, one that is "the completely new, the apocalyptic kind of temporality, our temporality".[3] Anders' realization of our lived experience of time, characterized by an essential ontological ambiguity mediated by technology, inspired him to reveal "the roots of our apocalyptic-blindness" (*Apokalypse-Blindheit*), which are surprisingly not so straightforward, and go beyond traditional theological interdicts. In this atomic age we lack means of understanding our activities, and therefore succumb to actions in effigy. We are more active than ever before, yet the composite level at which we can understand and imagine the meaning of such activities and work is at its height of disproportion.

Anders pushed to its extreme a claim that also was made by his ex-wife, Hannah Arendt, namely, that the concentration camps teach us something unique about the human condition: it is not enough to suggest simply that officers follow the orders of their superiors because they are stupid. Instead, subjectivization has lost its power to keep normal people from doing horribly evil things. Anders blamed this not so much on Nazi or totalitarian ideology, but, in nuce on the speed of technological advancement in Western societies, and our inability to keep up with it in imagination and knowledge. Like Hitler's workers in the death factories who had "done nothing" wrong, today we are not responsible for what we create, for we also have done "nothing but work" and (and here contrary to Karl Jaspers' interpretation) fulfilled our specialized role in society. Our work has freed us from responsibility to know what we do, to the point that "even the mass murderer" can be exempted

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[1] Robert Oppenheimer, quoted in (Schweber 2008, p. 229). Anders work was not unlike that of Umberto Eco, who addressed the significance of our entertaining ourselves into a lull of complacency and apathy as we move towards the endtimes. See (Elisabeth 2014)

[2] Anders expresses our apocalyptic situation in a uniquely temporal way: "For if the mankind of today is killed, then that which has been, dies with it; and the mankind to come too. The mankind which has been because, where there is no one who remembers, there will be nothing left to remember; and the mankind to come, because where there is no to-day, no to-morrow can become a to-day. The door in front of us bears the inscription "Nothing will have been" and from within: "Time was an episode". Not however as our ancestors had hoped, between two eternities; but one between two nothingnesses; between the nothingness of that which, remembered by no one, will have been as though it had never been, and the nothingness of that which will never be." (Anders and Eatherly 1961, p. 11)

[3] (Ibid. p. 12). Anders cast this problem as a technological one: "The moment devices were replaced by machines signaled the beginning of the obsolescence of human beings". See also (Schubert 1987, p. 55).

from his guilt (Anders 2014b). Of course, normal people always have been capable of doing horrible evil things, yet what is unique about modern technological advancements is that they have helped contribute to a machination that keeps us more unaware of our actions than ever before.

Anders attends to a genealogy of these sociological facts, and demonstrates how our present optimisms are inherently apocalyptic for they end in totality. The kernel of apocalyptic blindness and bourgeois, bad-faith optimism is traceable back to what Anders once named the "Transcendence of the Negative" in his "Thesis for an Atomic Age". This paper introduces the work of Anders more generally, addresses the phenomenological–theological import of his work, and investigates in particular an apocalyptic time-consciousness via this "Transcendence of the Negative" to demonstrate the necessity of a renewed sense of the apocalyptic today. His work in *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen 1* (Section three, "Über die Bombe und die Wurzeln Unserer Apokalypse-Blindheit") (Anders 2002a) and "Theses for an Atomic Age" are provided as anchor points that indicate forms of unique and specific eschatological involvement that today are in need of reimagining. Not only is theology under threat of malpractice when it marginalizes the apocalyptic, but so is phenomenology. For if anticipation is essential to the transcendental horizon, and is, as Levinas observes, precisely that which one cannot "expect", then the prophetic and predictive "to come" harbours far more "unveiling" (*apokalypsis*) potential for thought than usually is given credit. As Anders noted, the fear or concern with which we operate today is hardly proportionate to the threats that stand before us.

1. Phenomenology and Theology: Two Contexts

1.1. Apocalyptic Theology and Käsemann

Anders' apocalyptic work can be addressed more closely by juxtaposing it with two distinct movements within (especially post-war) 20th century German theology, and phenomenology. As for the former, Anders maintained an often vexed relationship with his theological contemporaries. More positively, his being befriended by Paul Tillich came as a consolation in the late 1920s after Anders' failed habilitation, which prevented him from being able to take up a professorship.[4] More negatively, he criticized his generation of theologians according to what he called "Scheler's Dictum" for their cultural and political optimisms revealed how they "believed in the existence of god but not the devil".[5] This generation of theological development in Germany ran contrary to the centuries-long Christian commitment to a robust sense of the apocalyptic, an *unveiling* of that which has been fully present all along, yet hitherto concealed. In order for evil to be retained, it has been understood that an *apokálypsis* (*apo*—from, *kalyptein*—to conceal) or great un-covering (not unlike *a-lethia*) is necessary. Only through the striking disclosure of *things unknown* can one's life be altered dramatically. "Apocalypse" is a moment of being appropriated by all that is disclosed, and when truth is given in a way that henceforth only had been unveiled in hints and suggestions.

Although it was not until the 1880s that the word took on any meaning of the immanent end of the world, the *Book of Revelation* given to John on the isle of Patmos in a dream, had already associated apocalypse with the coming end of the world. To the likely surprise of many modern scholars today, this book was one of the earliest of Biblical literature to have been accepted into the sacred canon by Christians, most likely due to its paradoxical depiction of redemption in the second coming of Christ, which further acted as confirmation of Jesus as the messiah for a young and persecuted band of his followers during this nascent period of Christianity. As the first line of the book of Revelation indicates, this was the apocalypse, unveiling, and "revelation of Jesus Christ" (Revelation 1:1) that points to the unconditional reign of God eternal in an eschatological horizon

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[4] Anders gave a lecture on Kafka in 1934 at the Institut d'Études Germaniques: "Theology without God". In regards to Tillich, see (Anders 1987, p. 29)

[5] Anders' work was not contrary to eschatological hope, yet found it to be often a preventer of human action in times of crises. (Anders 2002b)

beyond formal principle. As Pannenberg understood, the relation between this kind of historical unveiling and "truth" are essentially sutured to one another. Truth is not unchanging and is historical, and thus my future-relation is the focal point of truth coming into manifestation.

Despite modern theology's optimistic distaste for the apocalyptic, there was one movement within 20th century German theology that criticized any bourgeois inability to see the "negative" through the realism and Marxism of dialectical theology. An essential figure in these regards is Ernst Käsemann, a historical theologian who claimed his more "hermeneutic" contemporaries (e.g., Bultmann) lacked any polemical concern for Christian theology. He found that they ultimately attempted to purge Christian apocalypticism from eschatology, first, in order to make its call more acceptable to modern, humanist ears, and second, to develop a more subjectivist (and less social) account of sin and judgment. Yet for Käsemann the *cosmos* reflects the state or condition of humankind, the conditions of existence are afflicted in conjunction with humankind's own existential state (Martyn 1997). Justification is not only a subjective phenomenon, but carries over into a visible and objective degradation of the world. This is creation as *kurios*. St Paul's reference to the Day of Judgement, according to Käsemann, is cosmologically apocalyptic, not simply "forensic-eschatological", as Bultmann would have it (Bultmann 1952).

This apocalyptic vision of the end of the world maps an impassable cesura between natural revelation and the *Offenbarung* of God; two forms of reason we modern scholars are quick to fuse into one. Under Käsemann's analysis the "apocalyptic", as one commentator recently put it, "is the engine of Paul's entire theological vision" (Davis and Harink 2012, p. 42). Finding alibis in Overbeck's teachings that early Christians acted in accord with beliefs that the destruction of the world was immanent and therefore rejected "worldly" knowledge[6], Weiss' revival of eschatology ("consistent eschatology" movement) through interpreting the apocalyptic in Jesus' sermons (Weiss 1971), and Schweitzer's insistence that one must choose between a complete skepticism or a "thoroughgoing eschatology"[7] (Schweitzer 1968), Käsemann arrived at the conviction that living apocalyptically is essential to living Christianly. Although reliant on neither a Marixan/Hegelian optics nor a God-created end-time, Günther Anders also wished to reveal the true, Janus-faced nature of a bourgeois optimism whose "peaceful" commitments to technological progress were more violent than anyone had given them credit.

1.2. Phenomenology and Levinas' Eschatology

In regards to phenomenology, it was Levinas (coincidentally, the first to translate Anders' work into French in the 1930s) who first developed the question of eschatology and anticipation in relation to self-transcendence via an adaptation of Husserlian time-relation or time-consciousness. He did not seek an "unknown" kernel within the horizon of the known, capable of producing a hermeneutics without end, but rather sought, in a non-mystical fashion, the not-yet-known in the production of concrete experiences as they alter and take new shape. Time entails change of *all* that endures (not only the subject), yet eschatology is not a "beyond" that culminates in a seamless totality of history's unfoldings (Levinas 1990). Expressed in the preface to *Totality and Infinity*, morality is under constant suspension in times of both war and peace; morality has distracted from the goal of ethical responsibility, which entails a certain relation with the other, whose presence immediately brings my morality under question.[8] He found that war and peace both attest to the fight to *live*. To sustain oneself or "endure" (to live or persist) through time is to struggle not to come to an end. Levinas

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[6]　Franz Overbeck, quoted by (Davis and Harink 2012, p. 25). Overbeck stated the problem in rather unambiguous terms: "if Christianity is considered as a religion, then it is rather the case that, like every religion, it has the most unambiguous antipathy *towards* rational knowledge. I say 'like every religion', because the antagonism between faith and knowledge is permanent and absolutely irreconcilable". Davis interprets this to be an apocalyptic antinomy of belief and knowledge. (Ibid., p. 24).

[7]　(Schweitzer 1968, p. 328). Coincidentally, Schweitzer was at one point in correspondence with Anders.

[8]　For a much more detailed reading of Levinas on the question of eschatology, see (Richter 2008).

investigates the means of "desiring infinity" itself as it relates to subjective life, with metaphysical desire operating as the maintainer of the distance between subjects and their hopes for fulfillment.

Eschatological life plays an essential role in overcoming totality in order for this metaphysical desire to be released from that which binds it: "Eschatology institutes a relation with being beyond the totality or beyond history" without ultimately overcoming both "the past and the present" for "[t]he eschatological as the 'beyond' of history, draws beings out of the jurisdiction of history and the future; it arouses them ... to their full responsibility".[9] Eschatological vision does not seek a fulfillment of its historical traditions and myths, and "does not envisage the end of history within being understood as a totality, but institutes a relation with the infinity of being which exceeds the totality".[10] It thus provides a phenomenologically-inspired, now-centered vantage point for cutting against the grains of totality, promising a "relation with a *being*" as a "surplus always external to totality".[11] Eschatological life does so by carburetting two types of time "an infinite time and a time it will be able to seal, a completed time".[12] Completed time is intermittent and discontinuous, while infinite time is messianic and hope-giving via its permanence and duration.[13]

The ethical relation, of course, is essential in this regard: eschatological life opens upon the infinite task of unconditionally welcoming the other who disrupts ontology beyond responsibility. Eschatology traverses completed, historical, time and as Bergo interprets, "gives rise to a position from which *to judge* the history of human conflicts".[14] Levinas understood the essential role eschatological life has for totality being transcended, which results in a liberation from pasts that haunt and cripple us, both in the individual and collective contexts.[15] Although there may not be an utter transcendence of time itself, consciousness is able, because of the eschatological relation, to transcend the limits diachronic time has placed on our lived existence. As Heidegger noted and surely Levinas understood, since every being is temporal, "even the non-temporal' and the 'supra-temporal' are 'temporal' with regard to their Being" (Heidegger 1962). As Dasein relates, with Dasein's being-thrown-into-the-world, it does not will its transcendental relation, and "Being is the *transcendens* pure and simple".[16] It thus becomes the question of *how* we relate with the coming futures or non-futures of time as it passes, or does not come to pass, not only by attempting to transcend the totality of things, but also with the will to transcend, which indeed can have a totalizing function: *to transcend time entirely is to be infinite.* Although Anders would likely not disagree with Levinas' analysis, especially since both thinkers sought to uncover the lived temporal relation that makes war a modern condition, Anders' approach addressed a backdoor through which totality still could enter; something Levinas had not conceived. The two backdrops of Levinasian phenomenology, and apocalyptic theology furnish a broad context for Anders' interdisciplinary approach to the aforementioned problems.

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[9]　As Levinas continues, "Submitting history as a whole to judgment, exterior to the very wars that mark its end, it restores to each instant its full signification in that very instant: all the causes are ready to be heard ... " (Levinas 1969, pp. 22–23)

[10]　(Ibid., pp. 22–23).

[11]　(Ibid., preface).

[12]　(Ibid., p. 261).

[13]　Bergo conceives this as "a discontinuous time traversed by the infinite 'messianic' time which declares the possibility of the good". (Bergo 1999, p. 135)

[14]　(Ibid., p. 114). Bergo continues, "Eschatology is responsibility. But it gives rise to something other than responsibility." Levinas' eschatology is not to be understood as an "other" of time, for "Eschatology refers to a moment in which conflict and calculation are brought inexplicably to a halt by an unforeseeable welcoming of the other" and that "Eschatology, then, is not a *logos*". This is because it does not attempt to engage instrumental reason that seeks to master beings, but disrupts ontology. (Ibid., p. 49).

[15]　In the context of temporality and transcendence in Levinas' work, see (Klun 2007, pp. 587–603) There, Klun wonders" "Would genuine transcendence necessarily mean a negation of time in the sense of supra-temporality or timelessness?" (Ibid., p. 587). See also (Klun 2012, pp. 659–83)

[16]　(Ibid., p. 63).

2. Anders' Work in General

Anders' masterwork, the yet-to-be-translated *The Outdatedness of Man*, addresses and synthesizes select themes into a cohesive anthropological reflection that emphasizes how humankind is bringing about its own outdatedness today, in a technological and "atomic" age.[17] We presume there are aspects of our world that are nothing but "means", which are "clearly perceptible" yet not subject to action. It is these means that are in fact all the more dangerous, for they shroud themselves in their own seemingly meaningless functions. Yet in this case, the more meaninglessness they seem, the more danger they potentially harbour. In reality, we ourselves have become the means to bringing about our own death, as the quantity and quality of our actions far exceed our ability to understand them. This is the distinction Anders makes between humankind's penchant tendencies to "abstraction" from various material and factual realities, such as the threats of the end of the world. Anders was aware of the fact that there are presently no more than five people, distributed amongst the world power blocks and nations, that hold the keys that would allow them, in a matter of five minutes, to launch enough nuclear weapons to wipe away the future of humankind, and along with it, all history.

How humanity has gotten to this point is explicable in terms of our new relations with technology, following the first industrial age, when humankind transitioned from using tools and devices, to employing machines to replace the work of humankind all together. This altered and confused the means by which humankind understood its place in the *cosmos* of *activity*. In *Burning Conscience*, Anders initiates correspondence and a series of letter exchanges with Claude Eatherly, the pilot responsible for pushing the button to drop the bomb on Hiroshima. This one, very simple, flip of a switch set off a series of effects reflective of the burnt-up conscience of man himself. It attested to how today mechanical technology allows, with such incredible and uncanny ease, for the eradication of any sense of responsibility for our actions. The loss of conscience and moral responsibility is merely a product of our own doing as we pass off responsibility to our specialist authorities, which in the end has become *technology itself*. Technology is creating the systems out of which we operate, and in our very specific roles in the societies of history, we are all button pushers who cannot fathom the vast magnitude of such pushing.

All of this has lent to a complex of seemingly contradictory meanings for how everyday life is described today. On the one hand, we are literally omnipotent enough to blow up suns and worlds, yet on the other, such total omnipotence entails that we must, in employing these characteristics, be impotent and ultimately non-existent. This omnipotence/impotence factor is part and parcel of humankind's obsolescence, antiquatedness, and outdatedness. We are thus subject to "apocalyptic-blindness" in part due to how we now allow technologies to "speak on our behalf" and thus "transform us into minors and subordinates" (Anders 2002b) to the point that we are able, without *knowing it* to bring about the end of time itself.[18]

Technology can be defined as *the-without-us*. As we act and develop our technology, it is growing ever more powerful, making us more and more obsolete, in order to operate *without* our consent. Although we exert our will over the use of some devices, more complex machines amount to operating *without* our interest or awareness. Explication of this without-us is a notion consistently developed throughout his oeuvre, and concerns how technology is the new "subject of history" thus making humankind only "co-historical". In a creative apophatic expression of Nietzsche's *übermensch* (the call for man to overcome himself) Anders demonstrates how in fact mankind's developments, such as the hydrogen bomb, have overcome humankind's abilities and operate without consent. This

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[17] A significant aspect of this work of Anders' is a criticism of our forms of media today, namely, that the masses are addicted to what is artificial via commodification, and that this consumption is a blinding of one's actual actions in the world. Anders anticipated many of the observations made by the French Situationists, such as Guy Debord in the *Society of the Spectacle.*

[18] Da wir die Macht besitzen, einander das Ende zu bereiten, sind wir di *Herren der Apokalypse. Das Unendliche sind wir."* (Ibid., 239).

"technification of our being" has rendered responsibility void and obsolete.[19] Technological objects shroud the meanings of labour processes and entertain us into forms of illusory consumption, which are cast merely as means to—generally unknown—ends. Technological-being has made us apocalyptically blind to our own pending doom.[20] Therefore humans are already "antiquated", and thus all time is at "the end"; we are already living "in the end times" (as Zizek quite likely appropriated the term from Anders for a more economically oriented agenda). This is more than the end times, however; it is the *time of the end*. This points to a radical eschatology as apocalyptic: as an inversion of omniscience, the impotence of humans leaves no time left to transcend. It is astonishing that it everyone can contribute to bringing this end about, while at the same, absolutely no one feeling responsible for it. The *Handlung* of responsibility has been extracted from human action.

3. Anders and Apocalypse

Given this background, it is technological progress that holds human development in suspense, replacing the Socratic care for the soul with a care for (and subsequent servitude under) our mechanical advancement. What one cares for and about is observable in historical appropriation—for what one is willing to live and die, and to take risks to protect and save. Section 3 of *Die Antiquiertheit des Menschen* "Über die Bombe und die Wurzeln Unserer Apokalypse-Blindheit" (Anders 2002a) depicts an industrial revolution gone mad, with the bomb as a new philosophical "terrain" (*Gelände*)[21] that has at once spatial and temporal consequences for our inability to relate any longer with what is to come.[22] Humankind develops its technologies in lieu of itself, and this presents a challenging paradox: humankind finds itself immortal and even omnipotent in its outsourcing proxies of technology, yet this omnipotency can ultimately end in humankind's obliteration. In this sense, mankind acts as a counter-balancing to God's creative power by turning back time to the never-would-have-been.

This is why technological man is not a "nihilist" but as Anders puts it, an *annihilist*: "die potestas annihilationis, di reduction ad nihil".[23] For the first time in history we are "Lords of the Apocalypse" but constantly under our own threat, and therefore simultaneously "the first titans" and "the first dwarfs".[24] The omnipotence for which we have so long awaited necessarily ends in our self-destruction precisely by merit of this very omnipotence.[25] This produces two distinct impulses to cope. Either we become "historic" and operate from a source of power based upon our origins, or we resign to

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[19] For Anders "the chain of events leading up to the explosion is composed of so many links, the process has involved so many different agencies, so many intermediate steps and partial actions, none of which is the crucial one, that in the end no one can be regarded as the agent. Everyone has a good conscience, because no conscience was required at any point." (Anders 1956). See here also (Müller 2015, pp. 42–57)

[20] For Anders this amounts to a "'technification' of our being: the fact that to-day it is possible that unknowingly and indirectly, like screws in a machine, we can be used in actions, the effects of which are beyond the horizon of our eyes and imagination, and of which, could we imagine them, we could not approve—this fact has changed the very foundations of our moral existence. Thus, we can become 'guiltlessly guilty,' a condition which had not existed in the technically less advanced times of our fathers." (Anders and Eatherly 1961, p. 1)

[21] Anders wants to study the bomb "as a philosophical terrain:" "Als philosophisches Terrain ist die *Bombe*—oder richtiger: *unser Dasein unter dem Zeichen der Bombe*, den dies ist unser Thema—ein völlig unbekanntes Gelände." (Anders 2002b, p. 229).

[22] As interpreted by Babich, "Time, as we have seen that Anders also reflects upon it, is always found to have a kind topology, a spatial dimensionality, complete with the topographic features of a particular landscape." (Babich 2013)

[23] Anders calls it "Annihilismus"—the atombomb is the new "spielart" of nihilism. (Anders 1980, p. 293)

[24] (Ibid., p. 235): "Da wir Heutigen die ersten Menschen sind, die die Apokalypse beherrschen, sind wir auch die ersten, die pausenlos unter ihrer Drohung stehen. Da wir die ersten Titanen sind, sind wir auch *die ersten Zwerge* oder *Pygmäen*, oder wie immer wir und kollektive befristete Wesen nennen wollen, die nun nicht mehr als Individuen sterblich sind, sondern also Gruppe; und deren Existenz nur bis auf Widerruf gestattet bleibt." ("We today are the first people to dominate the Apocalypse, we are the first who are constantly under its threat. Since we are the first Titans, we are *the first Dwarves* . . . ").

[25] (Ibid., p. 233). Anders continues, and refers to the infinity of man's power, and therefore his omnipotence: "Wenn es im Bewußtsein des heutigen Menschen etwas gibt, was als absolut oder als unendlich gilt, so nicht mehr Gottes Macht, auch nicht die macht der Natur, von den angeblichen Mächten der Moral oder der Kultur ganz zu schweigen. Sondern *unsere* Macht. An die Stelle der, omnipotenzbezeugenden, _creatio ex nihilo ist deren Gegen macht getreten: die potestas annihilationis, di reduction ad nihil—und zwar eben als Macht, die in unserer eigenen Hand liegt. Die proetheisch seit langem ersehnte Omnipotenz ist, wenn auch anders also erhofft, wirklich unsere geworden. Da wir die Macht besitzen, einander das Ende zu befeiten, sind wir die *Herren der Apokalypse. Das Unendliche sind wir*."

nihilism, which gives the sense of power to liberate ourselves from past identities. This nihilism is an infinite deferral through abstraction, a false sense of (what Liessmann called) "omnipresence in space and time".[26] This renders an uncanny feeling in us, an embarrassment or "Promethean shame" as we compare ourselves to the technologies and machines we have created, which in many respects are far more advanced than we are.

4. Blind Optimism

One can detect at least four bases of our false optimism (which goes hand-in-hand with apocalyptic-blindness) in Anders' work, all of which maintain a theological element. First, Promethean shame is the central root ("Die Hauptwurzel") of apocalyptic blindness. Yet this feeling of belittlement by our own machinery tends to be suppressed, and we instead buck-up to this fear with an entirely unrealistic optimism about our own development, *mistaking the development of technology for our own*. This repetitive process has led to the absolute "inability to fear".[27] Today it is not fear from which we should be liberated, but rather misplaced hope. A certain kind of fear is the key to our liberation, one that "corresponds to the magnitude of the apocalyptic danger".[28]

A second contributing factor is our "Fortschrittsgläube" or "belief-in-progress" (Anders 1980, p. 268). The incessant insistence on development, which leads to this blindness is in part because "man believes in no end, man sees no end". Christian eschatologies of escapism founded in non-tribulationalism and a-millennialism ultimately prevent concerted attention to present dangers. Theology has lost its apocalyptic fear, which was at one point useful as a social "retainer" to keep this belief-in-progress at bay. Anders calls for a revivification of apocalyptic fear, although a "non-religious" one ("Apokalypse-Angst gerade bei nicht-Religiösen"[29]), for we are in no need of symbolization or hermeneutic interpretation of theological revelations when the end-of-time is at hand; our present problems, as Babich put it recently, are in no "need of subtle divination".[30] The key is not to prophetically raise our awareness of a hoped-for coming kingdom, but to trim away the false hope to which man so easily succumbs today.

A third basis of this optimism is a theological abstraction and reference to the "inaccessible". The mystics often "seek to open a metaphysical region" yet avoid it on account of their own self-referred "metaphysically-inferior position".[31] For Anders this ultimately suppresses the will and ability to see "objectively" the sentient threats that should concern us. What is necessary is not this kind of mystical "transcendence", but rather an "immanent transcendence" rooted in *das Gefälle* or "fallenness".[32] Our

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[26] Further, this attempted power-grabbing is to "ensure his provenance." (Liessmann 2014, p. 74)

[27] This is the age or "Zeitalter der Unfähigkeit zur Angst". (Anders 1972, p. 257).

[28] He puts this in similar terms in his "Commandments in the Atomic Age:" "The truth is rather the contrary that we live in the 'Age of inability to fear'." "Force yourself to produce that amount of fear that corresponds to the magnitude of the apocalyptic danger." (Anders 1961, p. 14)

[29] For Anders "ein erstmaliger Fall: Apokalypse-Angst gerade bei nicht-Religiösen—dann ist nicht die geringste Panik zu registrieren." Man glaubt kein Ende, man sieht kein Ende—Der Fortschrittsbegriff hat uns apokalypse-blind gemacht."(Ibid., p. 271).

[30] As Babich interprets, "Far from any symbolism, the apocalypse for Anders could henceforth have nothing whatsoever to do with any kind of second coming, any sort of new Reich, any last judgment, or anything at all that one might need to 'interpret.' What we no longer is hermeneutic esotericism: there is no 'meaning' in need of subtle divination." (Babich 2013).

[31] For Anders: "Aber das bedeutet natürlich nicht, dass es sich in unserem Falle um eine echte mystische Aktion handelt. Der Unterschied bleibt trotz der Typus-Ähnlichkeit fundamental: Denn waehrend sich der Mystiker metaphysiche Regionen zu erschließen sucht und in der Tatsache, dass diese ihm gewoehnlich unerreichbar bleiben, selbst etwas Metaphysisches sieht (naemlich die Folge seiner eigenen metaphysisch-inferioren Position); gelten unsere Versuche der Erfassung von Gegenstaenden, über di wir verfuegen; ja von solchen, die wir, wie die Bombe, selbst hergestellt haben; von Gegenstaenden also, die keineswegs uns unerreichbar sind, sondern allein uns als Vorstellenden und uns also Fühlenden." (Anders 1980, p. 267).

[32] Was überbrückte werden soll, ist also durchaus kein Transzendenz, sondern höchstens eine "immanente Transzendenz", das heisst: das 'Gefälle.'" (Ibid., p. 267). *das Gefälle* can be variously translated as slope, chasm, or a falling. "Fallenness" in this case is not a prohibited translation, as Anders makes constant reference to the absolute necessity of "enlightening our defects." Further "die Aufklärung unseres Defektes nötig ist, muss daher versucht werden." (Ibid., p. 277).

theologies have not gained the insight that what we create, our technologies, go ahead of us and work on our behalf. What we "have" is at work without us whether we know it or even want it: "'Having' … in this case … automatically becomes 'doing.'"[33] We again fail to see the metaphysical essence at work in the lattices of reality.

More at fault than this kind of harmatiology is a Monism rooted in pantheism, or "more rightly: in a 'pan-atheism'" that pre-approved all development as in effect "natural" and therefore inherently good. This theological view endorsed "automatically the movement of optimism of our age: the concept of development is integrated within our concept of nature".[34] It is believed that nature is not degrading (*deszendenztheorie*), but ever increasing in quality, and so therefore is humankind. This "secret maxim" of the bomb is "identical to that of monism"[35], which is inherently nihilistic for it paradoxically turns a blind eye to the *negative* by claiming to live in the present moment, ignoring the "end" and the ends of our productions. As a result, we have spawned "nihilism on a global scale".[36] It has been claimed mistakenly that Anders was a nihilist, yet he in fact criticized nihilism and associated it with apocalyptic blindness (Palaver 2014). He claimed that among Christian masses and "atheists" alike there is an unconsciously prevalent nihilism that drives the fatalism inherent within optimism. We "are even incapable of losing hope" as "incurably optimistic ideologists" who "even in a situation of utter hopelessness" will drift into darkness quietly.[37] It is misplaced optimism that, for Anders, is a core of apocalyptic blindness.

5. Transcendence of the Negative

This critique of optimism is essential for Anders' subtle insight regarding the "Transcendence of the Negative", which could be interpreted in two ways. Anders claims we need to imagine nothingness—the total nonexistence of not just things within frameworks, but "this framework itself, of the world as a whole". We have failed at doing this because of our powers for abstraction, which end in the aforementioned blind optimisms detached from the reality of what we do and what we have created:

> "Such 'total abstraction' (which, as a mental performance, would correspond to our performance of total destruction) surpasses the capacity of our natural power of imagination: 'Transcendence of the Negative.' But since, as 'homines fabri,' we are capable of actually producing nothingness, we cannot surrender to the fact of our limited capacity of imagination: the attempt, at least, must be made to visualize this nothingness." (Anders 2014b)

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[33] (Ibid., p. 285). This is in the context of "having" the Atomic bomb, which proves for us that the things we have, despite their not being employed or deployed, are always at work: "Aber gleich, ob wir die Schuld Sehenden zuschreiben oder Blinden—das moralisch entscheidende Faktum besteht natürlich nicht in der Apokalypse-Blindheit, sondern in der Bombe selbst; in der Tatsache, dass wir sie haben. Und da *haben* wie wir früher gezeigt hatten in diesem Falle, gleich ob der Habende es wünscht oder nicht, automatisch zum 'Tun' wird, bedeutet das, dass das Faktum, um das er moralisch hier geht, die Bombe als Tat ist."

[34] (Ibid., p. 310): "der Monismus schillerte, im Unterschiede zum russischen, in einen enthusiastischen Pantheismus, richtiger: in einen "Pan-Atheismus" hinueber. Die von der Theologie seit eh und je behauptete Identität von Pantheismus und Atheismus wurde damals also wirklich zum Ereignis. Dazu kam, dass die Bewegung automatisch den Optimismus des zeitalters: den Fortschrittsbegriff in seinen Natur begriff integrierte—wie man denn ueberhaupt die Deszendenztheory, den, in der Natur 'nachgewiesenen' Fortschritt dazu benutzte, um die universelle Gueltigkeit der Fortschrittkategorie zu beweisen."

[35] (Ibid., p. 291): "Die Geheimmaxime der Bombe ist identisch mit der des Monismus bzw. Nihilismus; die Bombe benimmt sich wie ein Nihilist." Und "der Massen-Nihilismus und die Massen-Annihilation geschichtlich zusammenfielen, das ist äuserste frappant."

[36] (Ibid., 286): ""Die Herren der Bombe sind Nihilisten in Aktion." "schuldig des Nihilismus; des Nihilismus in globalem Maßstabe." To the question "Was ist eigentlich "nihilismus?"" Anders' answers "der Nihilismus der Effekt eines katastrophenhaften Ereignisses." (Ibid., p. 289).

[37] Anders continues with a reflection on Samuel Beckett's "Waiting for Godot": "What Beckett presents is not nihilism, but the inability of man to be a nihilist even in a situation of utter hopelessness. Part of the compassionate sadness conveyed by the play springs not so much from the hopeless situation as such as from the fact that the two heroes, through their waiting, show that they are not able to cope with this situation, hence that they are *not* nihilists." (Anders 2014a)

Our abstraction has come to a dangerous intermission in which we must find a way to respond that corresponds to the threat level our apocalyptic situation has created. Our capacity for imagination, which is capable of projecting future potentialities, has been squelched by a limited sense of time. We need to broaden our sense of time and the horizon of our imagination to include a vision for how those things we have created are going ahead of us, working without us. We must stretch this capacity to imagine "nothingness" itself.

In a first sense, "transcendence of the negative" is descriptive of our trenchant ability to abstract. The "negative" here is understood in the *subjective genitive*, as that which we mistakenly try to "overcome". We are all escapists hiding in the "ivory tower of perception", and phenomenologists especially have the special ability to build and reside in such a tower.[38] Transcendence typically is understood only in its positive element; with the root of *ascendence* or crescendo or ascension, and prefix *trans*, or "going beyond" it is presumed to entail a positive development of she/he who transcends. Yet, central to its core is a movement beyond the pale of normality that entraps us in bare life. Anders' polemical use of "transcendence" in this context points to a kind of capacity of transcendental activity, which retains a negative element. This is the dark side of the capacity to transcend—to seek distance from the realities of our less than hoped for productions. This is why we are "inverted Utopians": "while ordinary Utopians are unable to actually produce what they are able to visualize, we are unable to visualize what we are actually producing".[39] To "expand the capacity of your Imagination", and the ability to transcend the transcendence of the negative, means, in concreto: "increase your capacity to fear".[40]

The capacity of imagination of the negative allows us to see our relations with our technologies for what they are.[41] Only those who can learn how to "visualize the effect of his doings . . . has the chance of truth" (Anders 2014b). This imagination involves a phenomenology of things that inquires into the effective reality of what our things "do", as nothingness calls us to something greater as a symbol for freedom (Schraube 2005). Since nothingness is the final, resting horizon of negativity, its idea of non-being calls for one to not be bound by the categories and laminates that have come to define oneself. "Getting over" the negative is something usually celebrated, and often touted today as precisely religious and transcendent. One must remain positive. Yet Anders conceives of "transcendence" not simply according to a context of the unconditional or Absolute, but to a condition of possibility and a movement of extension in general. The involuntary transcendence according to which we operate today is the endowing of our technologies with the transcendental function of "going beyond" on our behalf, yet without us.

In a second interpretation, the "negative" here could be understood as an *objective genitive*, which would make the negative a means of overcoming. In which case, the transcendence of the negative is also an involution. To transcend is to infinitely go beyond, and to negate "the what is" in order to arrive at what truly is. In the phenomenological epoché, one is to posit "nothing" and to operate with an absence of a positive in order to arrive at a "pure observation". In the end, transcendence, for Anders is not merely the ecstasy of consciousness. It is not, as Levinas also understood, an open self-projection, a false transcendence or *immanence manquée*.[42] Instead of transcending the negative, *transcendence is the negative* and a coming to terms with the freedom inherent within a phenomenological optics. Correspondingly, the transcendental perspective, properly understood, would be pure negativity.

Transcendence, then, would not be an "overstepping" of that which negates, but rather an active anticipation of being ahead of oneself. This can be read back into phenomenology. As Levinas

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38　(Ibid., thesis 12).
39　(Ibid., thesis 9).
40　(Ibid., thesis 13).
41　Imagining the negative is a capacity or "can do ability" that seeks what is not "done".
42　It is perhaps Heidegger against whom both Levinas and Anders are casting their thought. In *Sein und Zeit* Dasein is developed as a "being-free-for," as an always out-there. In this limited sense *Dasein* is always *Res Transcenens*.

understood, anticipation properly conceived is anticipation of what one does not know. It indeed is *only* what one does not know that is worth anticipating or being of any potential interest. Thus, a certain kind of futurity is interwoven in the fabrics of human life. The question then becomes whether or not there is a futurity that is more capable of striking awe and wonder in a way that incites new activity and change. The apocalyptic can in this sense be an instructive concept.

6. Apocalyptic Phenomenology

In *Das verspielte Außerhalb* (*The Forfeited Beyond*) Anders depicts a befuddled student in the year 2058 who, in reading the annuls of 20th century history, is stumped by constant references to "when here and there the pressure of dictatorships became unbearable, masses of refugees were generated". This sentence made no sense to the student because he was born into a "World State", which as a matter of consequence abolished any potential of political exteriority. "'Masses of refugees?' What does that mean? Where could one escape to? Was there something outside?'" In the end, "Where there is only *one*, there can be no remains. Thus, also no remaining site of refuge" (Anders 1984). This is the dark, eventual consequence of our transcending the negative. Yet for Anders, this ability to transcend at all is itself also under threat to the point that there will no longer be anything to transcend. The apocalypse turns attention to the consolidation of power and deep totality that persecutes transcendence under the guise of world peace and optimistic "development" spread over the globe. By merit of there no longer being a "political" outside or beyond, there also is no movement of transcendence.

Anders' work was not only an attempt to describe a belief system via the apocalyptic, but also the "how structure" according to which one can live apocalyptically; that is, to develop the capacity to live with *the end of the end* in mind. Broadly conceived, phenomenology has always been understood, even from its most cognitivist corners, to be a means of achieving the goal of *appreciation* of the coming-into-appearance itself. It is not simply that which appears that is to be appreciated, for such content can entail negative consequences, social or personal. Yet without this appreciation for appearing in its "how", then the boldness of anticipation and futurity can only inadvertently stumble upon things as "they really are" at a particular moment. No "reduction" will ever be performed without this specific kind of appreciation, and as noted earlier, anticipation is an attitude that does not know what it anticipates. Appearing is to be given full quarter to operate according to its own unique hermeneutic horizon.

There are at least three ways in which one might extract some implicit values of the apocalyptic in the context of phenomenology, although each of which are intricately implicated in one another: (1) It can aid in developing a form of futurity or anticipation that is not "critical", yet also not ignorant of the yet-to-appear negative; (2) it develops according to a practical *conservation* or restrainment of annihilation by means of attaining to a transcendental horizon that imaginatively disrupts the tendency to blind abstraction; and (3) it might provide a steady eye and attendance to what has been unveiled and revealed despite the affective relation one might have with the content of revelation.

Firstly, to want to see things as they really are is to seek to understand the limits of knowledge and the inherent negativity interwoven within our social frameworks. In a brief footnote (note 3) to "Theses for an Atomic Age" Anders bemoans how phenomenologists have incorrectly emphasized the blindly-optimistic element of our "limitless horizons". This optimism is rooted in the belief that our default position is not one of not-having, but of having. We *have* the world and commodify it. It is ours and we therefore control it by merit of constructing and shaping it due to our *conscientious* activities. The consequences of this approach to "having" have been vast: we have forgotten that the world exceeds us, and thus have not inquired appropriately into its deeper potential, which always exceeds the anticipated.

One of Günther Anders' (at that time Günther "Stern") first works, *Über das Haben*, was precisely inspired by what he deemed to be the societal shift of interest from "being" to "having" (Stern 1928). It is "having" that drives our compulsions to consume and to apply/do. These reflections on our modern age's obsession with "having" helps explain also Anders' abhorring of any phenomenology

detached from *phronesis* and everyday practicality, and thus hiding in "perception". Anders is firmly opposed to the *prehension* tendency—often among phenomenologists—to perceive without *conscience* and without conscious reflection upon one's lived involvement with "the grasped". By widening the experiential view (not expanding the abstracting "perception") of the present via the capacity of imagination, lived experience becomes the attempted fusion of past and future in order to *realize* anew and come to appreciate how one is alive via a legitimate fear of a "future perfect". Prescient coming events should act as flashpoints for interpreting our actions in a way that turn back the clock on humankind's obsolescence. At the very least, such events allow for the possibility of preventing its further proliferation. The present danger of "being-without" can and must alter one's being-present. It is not "having" that solves our problems, but a deeper *anticipation* of privation. To anticipate is to experience one's not-having, but to expect something's coming into appearance.[43] Like clicking up the arch of a roller coaster, anticipation gives itself in not-having, and should be seen beyond its positive (excitation) or negative (dread) correlates, as it operates fundamentally as a "not-having" that is imbued within the experience of un-veiling (*apo-calypse*) itself.

Secondly, apocalyptic phenomenology can conjure imagination beyond abstraction, and this further is understood again according to one's projective futurity. The phenomenological problem of constitution already presumes a future-time consciousness or to-come associated with past experiences. Because I have seen tables, and know they most often have four legs, whenever I see what resembles a table, I project the fourth leg onto it, even if I only perceive three legs. Husserl called this the "finishing act" of consciousness, where one brings to an experience the virtual content that fills-in and thickens the experience. Categorial intuition is brought into a synthesis with sensual intuition. Anders' approach seems to presume that it is possible to come into relation with our *projections* (Husserl's categorial intuitions), which are not merely abstract ideas, but also, more importantly, temporally construed presumptions of how "the what" of an experience has been (e.g., the past experience of a table), is (e.g., the claim "that is a table"), and will be (there are future tables upon which I can rely and on which I can set my coffee mug). This kind of project can be captured in order to bring about a more profound and realistic engagement with "the end" according to which we live in actuality today.

Levinas took up a similar, temporal interest by extending Husserl's *Ruckfrage* to spatial and temporal dimensions, yet doing so without presupposing an ecstatic temporal structure whose core was "being ahead of itself". Phenomenology never can be solely a future projection at the expense of the present. Space and time are constitutive of a proto subject capable of responsibility for what is. Yet this responsibility cannot be housed only in passive, non-intentional consciousness; this is not only "pre-reflective" as Husserl conceived it, but importantly "non-reflective", for it is pure, non-intervening *durée*, a transcendental naiveté cut off from projection. Anders also sees that merely passive, or "abstracting" *consciousness* lacks a temporal *conscience* that is responsible. Taking responsibility for one's "projections" is a means of attempting to uncover that which is precisely in need of being unveiled; to extract from everyday lived experience a signification according to which one is involved actively and tactically, yet one that gets covered-up so easily through abstraction. Apocalyptic phenomenology would "pull back the veil" on apocalyptic blindness.

Thirdly, such a phenomenology can tarry more properly with the negative, and this points to how Anders' project is distinct from Levinas'. Where Levinas' eschatological phenomenology tended to cast transcendence only in its positive sense and light, Anders' project is an apocalyptic one that reveals also the sad role transcendence currently plays in abstraction from our negative socialities. Political totalitarianism on a global scale seeks to end self-transcendence, for where there is no outside, there is no transcendence. The paradox, Anders seems to recognize, is that humankind is incessant to go beyond itself, yet when it takes on the posture of abstraction as opposed to *poesis* or imagination,

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43   One could mention here also a Derridean "messiahless messianism," which bore a similar motivation to conjure and create a temporal anticipation. Anders' is messiahless yet kingdomless also, with anticipation of "difference" far less celebrated than in Derrida's account.

its subsequent formation brings about society's ending. This propensity to abstract is highly active in the unreflective and superficial means/ends distinction to which we so often resort. For Anders, "no means is only a means" (Anders 1980) and it certainly is not enough to deny (as Kant did) the means/ends ethical conclusion, which underwrites all the more the power of this illusory distinction. Rather, the distinction (developed and adhered to in the first industrial revolution) must be rendered absurd, for technological devices are more than empty husks that can be filled with good or bad purposes. Likewise, time must be rendered non-pragmatically, otherwise we lose the ability to attend to the form and "means" that affect us.

Apocalyptic phenomenology does not seek to "widen one's perception" or horizon (which Anders criticized as detached and partly responsible for our optimistic "abstraction" from actuality) but more poignantly, to widen the entire framework itself by focusing on anticipation of the "unveiling". For Anders, Heidegger's well known necessity of living in the productive angst created by being before death was strangely idealistic and optimistic; it relied upon angst to do the heavy lifting of creating imaginative, subjective self-reflection. This subjectification was far too detached from environment and spatiality, and Anders sough to set the entire frame beyond one's death to include the death of everything, of all things' endings. This adjusting of the immanent frame can take place only by: fearing courageously, widening the imagination, enacting a technological resistance, expanding the investigation into one's actions that does not leave them to the will of chance, and actively bringing into carburation one's knowledge of what one does with the actuality of one's actions. These actions and attitudes all contribute to the potential for a broadened sense of transcendence.

7. Apocalyptic Transcendence

Living apocalyptically first involves locating how oneself already is bringing about the end of the very things one cherishes. This first must be accomplished without projecting blame onto a third party. This kind of living, if we take heed from Anders, is more than a general eschatological involvement, which often has the tendency to avoid the question of the apocalyptic in favour of general, blind anticipation. The apocalyptic is a specific kind of eschatological involvement that does not bar "hope", but also does not employ it as the common denominator, for this particular modality of hope so easily births naïve optimism founded in metaphysical abstraction. Yet Anders' prophetic voice (demanding more than an "immanent transcendence") goes beyond mere descriptivist tendencies, and calls for the responsibility of everyone to first reflect upon how we all (even those who claim its coming) bear responsibility for bringing about the end. This overlooked laminate of lived, temporal relation is of course not an invisible one, with demons and devils pulling the strings, but rather a world that humans themselves are responsible for having constructed.

Ours is a post-apocalyptic age, and this calls for both *mourning* and *restraining*—both of which can be acts of transcendence. Mourning is birthed in a transcendence that takes the negative seriously, conjuring a true reflection upon nothingness that entails a life changing encounter with the something-that-would-have-not-been. To cherish something so dearly, and to imagine it never having been, is an act of mourning. Anders sought to preserve the potential of the frame of phenomenology itself—that things can presence themselves. This anticipation births appreciation, and a conservative contentedness with what/who one is.

This leads to restraining, which inherently is conservative. Although Anders would have balked at Moltmann's hope-filled, Blochian utopic vision of coming kingdoms, Anders very likely would have agreed that the future-relationship "is revolutionizing and transforming the present".[44] Although Moltmann is often cast as a blind optimist, he was aware of Anders' work, cursorily noting that his was "an apocalypse without a kingdom" (Moltmann 2004). The upshot of a kingdomless fear of the

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[44] (Moltmann 1974, p. 16). Besides Bloch's utopic language, another strong influence upon Moltmann was Hans Joachim Iwand's interpretation of the social dimensions of eschatology and Christian resurrection.

apocalypse is the realization that we are the last line of restraining it. With "hopeful negativity", Anders often was critiqued for his *conservative* tendencies.

Yet it is precisely such conservation that is essential to the work of living apocalyptically. The "apo" in apocalypse refers to undoing, holding back, and retaining the "calypso" (*Kalyptein*) of chaotic destruction. The role St. Paul attributes (2 Thessalonians 2:1–12) to Divinity as the *katechon* (*kata*—holding down, back or against) of chaos is one that Anders calls for us to take upon ourselves. There is no longer time for theological abstraction that casts the blame of not preventing humankind's mistakes on the shoulders of God. Such abstracting theology is responsible also for Auschwitz in the first place.[45] Anders calls upon us to prevent the world's *kataklysmós* or flood, and in an Anders-inspired rendition of Noah's plea, Jean-Pierre Dupuy captures this role of becoming such retainers quite astonishingly:

> "The day after tomorrow, the flood will be something that will have been. And when the flood will have been, everything that is will never have existed. When the flood will have carried off everything that is, everything that will have been, it will be too late to remember, for there will no longer be anyone alive. And so there will no longer be any difference between the dead and those who mourn them. If I have come before you, it is in order to reverse time, to mourn tomorrow's dead today. The day after tomorrow it will be too late."
> (Dupuy 2013)

Restraining the status quo seeks to prevent major ecological alteration, and Anders' intervention is a plea for an overcoming of the "transcendence of the negative" so that space (via one world, globalized peacefulness that promotes "progress" blindly) and time (via the warring self-annihilation of humankind) do not come to an end, especially under the guise and lull of a seemingly peaceful and unproblematic, yet equally absolute *totality*.[46] Uncannily similar to the concerns of the one world order of Revelation 13, Anders knew that any feverish attempt to prevent the doom and gloom version of apocalypse in the name of "world peace" and globalization would hold equally damning effects. Where totality slips seamlessly into the lattices of everyday life, "where there is only *one*" there can remain no outside towards which one might aspire to transcend.

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[45] This is why Anders can operate with the full conviction that it has become a sociological fact that "Religious and philosophical ethic codes that have hitherto existed have all, without exception, grown obsolete; they also exploded in Hiroshima and were also gassed in Auschwitz." (Anders 1979, p. 195)

[46] As Körtner noted, Anders "apocalyptic is negative" in the sense that no longer is its "complete end understood" and it seeks a "preservation of the status quo: The end time from which there is no escape is to be perpetuated indefinitely." (Körtner 1995, p. 214)

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