

This is a pre-publication version of Ellis, D & Tucker, I. M. (2011). Virtuality and Ernst Bloch: Hope and subjectivity, *Subjectivity* (2011) 4, 434–450. doi:10.1057/sub.2011.15

## **Virtuality and Ernst Bloch: Hope and subjectivity**

Darren Ellis, and Ian Tucker

Psychology, University of the West of England, Bristol, BS16 1QY,

Darren.Ellis@uwe.ac.uk

School of Psychology, University of East London, Stratford Campus, Water Lane,  
London, E15 4LZ, UK.

E-mail: i.tucker@uel.ac.uk

### **Abstract**

Theories of affect have become an increasingly popular tool with which to conceptualise and analyse subjectivity. Of particular interest to us in this article are expositions that have sought to bring to the forefront of analysis notions of excess and virtuality on the grounds that they bear fruit in relation to a potential politics of change. Although contemporary notions of virtuality and excess are highly attractive, they also bring us to one of the more unsettling features of affect theory: How is it possible to suitably analyse the realms of virtuality and excess due to their non-representational qualities? To begin to address this problem, we explore process-oriented theories of virtuality in relation to the Marxist process theory of Ernst Bloch, and draw on the recent protest movements against cuts to Higher Education funding as an example of what we term ‘affective hope’, a concept indebted to Bloch’s notion of educated hope.

**Keywords: affect; hope; process philosophy; Ernst Bloch**

### **Introduction**

Theories of affect have become an increasingly popular tool with which to conceptualise and analyse subjectivity, due to their apparent power to unravel some of the complexity within which the psychological and social intertwine and knot. As witnessed in this journal (Blackman et al, 2008; Clough, 2008; Frosh, 2008; Venn, 2009), particular theories of affect have the potential to offer very socially aware and expansive ideas of subjectivity. It is upon and within this wave of engagements with theories of affect that we would like to begin our journey with subjectivity. Of particular interest to us are expositions that have sought to bring to the forefront of analysis notions of excess and virtuality (which have been heavily influenced by the writings of Bergson, Deleuze and Massumi (Clough, 2007)), on the grounds that they bear fruit in relation to a potential politics of change. Although these notions of virtuality and excess are highly attractive, they also bring us to one of the more unsettling features of affect theory: how is it possible to suitably analyse the realms of virtuality and excess due to their non-representational qualities? It becomes likened to the dark matter of physics, a unifying theory, but nonetheless absolutely hypothetical. In an attempt to bring light to the matter, we explore the similarities and points of difference between the aforementioned process oriented

theories of virtuality and the Marxist process theory of Ernst Bloch, with the latter a rare part of contemporary social theory despite offering some very relevant contributions to the more recent explorations of affect. Bloch, we argue, offers some seeds of hope in this area mainly through the conceptualisations he develops of excess. We introduce readers to what we see as relevant aspects of Bloch's work, before focusing particularly on his attempts and urges for us to utilise a kind of 'affective' engagement with theory in order to be explicitly disposed in endeavours to bring about better futures.

In doing so, we follow Ben Anderson's (2006a, b) Bloch-influenced work, in which he develops a model of thinking of hope, for critical geography. Anderson's attraction to Bloch revolves around the notion that hope can become a viable theoretical tool for re-conceptualising some of the maladies of our social worlds (for example, anxiety, depression, sorrow). Anderson's critical geography approach argues that Bloch's writings on hope, when supplemented with contemporary theories of affect, can help develop a model of geography that is utopic rather than purely critical (for example, a sense of reconstructive rather than deconstructive). We draw on some of Anderson's ideas regarding Bloch's work on hope, and use them to develop an approach that contributes to contemporary social scientific theories of affect, themselves focused on understanding the changing nature of subjectivity. This requires us to be openly engaged enough to affect and be affected by what Bloch describes as 'hope' and its excessive existence. More specifically, while an approach to affect formulated via the work of Brian Massumi directs us towards the potential excessive nature of virtuality, but crucially as not reducible to the possibilities of the present, Bloch offers a way to think of what we term 'affective hope' as focused on excess and the virtual unknown of the future, but as grounded in the possibilities of present everyday life. We draw on the recent protest movements against cuts to Higher Education funding as an example of new collective forms of affective hope, indebted to Bloch's notion of educated hope, which can act as political forces attempting to form better futures that operate at the intersection of the possible, potential and virtual.

### **Relational Affect**

The 'turn to affect', as it is increasingly becoming known, has emerged across social and cultural theory in recent years through an interest in using 'affect' as a way to think about the inter-relational production of forms of subjectivity (Blackman and Cromby, 2007; Gregg and Seigworth, 2010). Such moves arose largely through a desire to re-calibrate analysis of subjectivity towards notions of embodiment and relationality. This is in part the result of critiques of the efforts of discursive theories that have been seen to reduce the formation of subjectivities through patterns of discursive interaction and/or positioning (Brown and Tucker, 2010). In addition to this, affect has become a driving force for models that present forms of subjectivity as produced by processes rather than existing as substances. It is this move that has led to the distancing of affect from emotion, as the latter is so often used as a referent for the internalising of culturally recognised patterns of being (Blackman and Cromby, 2007). Affect has come to be used to point to the patterns of force that bodies (human and non-human) have upon one another, and as such has become a concept used to orient analysis towards the formation of subjectivities through patterns of relationality (or forms of becoming for Deleuze). Although diverse in nature, many contemporary theories of affect have been influenced by Spinozist thought, the idea that activity is produced through the relational forces that exist between bodies, rather than driven

by internalised drives.

The term 'affect' has developed a number of meanings in recent times, with Gregg and Seigworth (2010) pointing to no less than eight theoretical trajectories founded on the term (and they state this is an inexhaustive list). The trajectory we follow is that owing much to Brian Massumi's (2002) Spinozist-Deleuzian-flavoured transition from emotion to affect as a means of reinstating a notion of 'movement' and process into cultural theory. Massumi's concerns for cultural theory are similar to problems in critical psychology and the social sciences more generally. Namely, the tendency for critically discursive theories to end at a point of stability (largely through positioning), however fragile or temporary that may be (Brown and Tucker, 2010). In such theories, emphasis remains on how subjects and objects are formed, and the ways they are 'fixed' in society. While such work is valuable, it does not allow for an adequate notion of change, through pointing to the existence of the potential for alternative modes of subjectivity, that an emphasis on movement can better highlight. Affect, for Massumi, offers a way out of this cul-de-sac. Through affect, movement can return to analysis. Massumi states:

Position no longer comes first, with movement a problematic second. It is secondary to movement and derived from it. It is retro movement, movement residue. The problem is no longer to explain how there can be change given positioning. The problem is to explain the wonder that there can be stasis given the primacy of process. (Massumi, 2002, pp. 7–8)

Massumi endeavours to pin down specific features of affective activity. The emphasis on relationality, on the formation of individual subjectivities through forces that are relational not stable entities, results in locating force between rather than in people. However, this means that it is not possible to locate the place where affect can be seen. For Massumi it is not a substance, but a processural force. This force Massumi sees as 'virtual', as it cannot be located or identified in any one thing. It is through virtual forces that patterns of subjectivity are extracted, through processes of selection that in turn form actualised states. For Massumi, emotions become actualised forms of virtuality, formed and understood through grids of socio-linguistic meaning, whereas affect acts as a means to tune into virtual forces. The trajectory that Massumi develops is one indebted to the work of Spinoza and Bergson before him, and how their ideas were taken up in the work of Deleuze. Specifically, this is around the notions of virtual-actual and affect as a relational force between bodies. In discussing how Deleuze (re)drew this line from Spinoza to Bergson, Massumi states:

Affect or intensity in the present account is akin to what is called a critical point, or a bifurcation point, or singular point, in chaos theory and the theory of dissipative structures. This is the turning point at which a physical system paradoxically embodies multiple and normally mutually exclusive potentials, only one of which is 'selected'. (2002, pp. 32–33)

This idea of processes of selection working from a broader set of possible futures brings with it notions of potential change through introducing an 'excess' of experience. If activity is produced through selection, this means that a wider field of alternative options exists, from which the selective process proceeds. This is to follow Spinoza's (1996) claim that bodies are most appropriately thought in terms of what they can do, meaning a vast range of potential bodily doings exists than those that we are aware of. Our bodies

'move and feel' and their capacity to do this is beyond our perception and knowledge of them. Here virtuality is taken as a proponent of change, with actuality referring to the everyday lived material world. Virtuality then speaks for the ever-present excess that Massumi takes as core to experience. It is this excess, that which cannot be known, where Massumi claims potentiality resides. This potentiality is the main medium for change; it works as the force for a dynamic model of life to emphasise an anti-essentialist philosophy of change. It is here that seeds of change and liberation begin to emerge, in locating the ever-present productive force of the virtual, through which creation can emerge. Massumi states in reference to affect that:

When the continuity of affective escape is put into words, it tends to take on positive connotations. For it is nothing less than the perception of one's own vitality, one's sense of aliveness, of changeability (often signified as 'freedom'). (2002, p. 36)

Taken here, affect is a dynamic process of change (or difference) that emerges through the virtual-actual, which are 'two facets of the same expression' (Hallward, 2006, p. 35). Affect is perceived from the actual 'side' for Massumi and what we 'see' as affect is the evolution of change from the perspective of that which becomes actualised into forms of everyday material life. Actualised affective forms do not visibly fold off from virtuality to produce the concrete reality of our everyday lives. Rather, we 'see' actualised affective forms that are mere snapshots of the virtual realm. Moments of present that, through perception, we string together to form our perceptual realities. This 'excess', or 'more' has become a central feature for Massumi's work on affect – see, for example, Massumi (2002):

What is being termed affect in this essay is precisely this two-sidedness, the simultaneous participation of the virtual in the actual and the actual in the virtual, as one arises from and returns to the other. Affect is this two-sidedness as seen from the side of the actual thing, as couched in its perceptions and cognitions. (2002, p. 35)

Such notions of excess in Massumi's work, we want to argue, offer potentially valuable links to Bloch's discussions of the subject, which he saw as constantly unfinished and being made, and crucially, formed in relation to the reality of the future as not-yet known or produced. It is the notions of affect as prepersonal and excessive that we wish to focus on in this article. This is not to dismiss the many and varied alternate accounts of affect (see Blackman and Cromby, 2007 for a valuable summary). Rather, it is the realm of unrealised potential, along with affect as originating in some way before individuals that are of interest, given the possible utility of Bloch's utopic theory for offering a specific mode of affectual thinking, rather than a generalised view that affect theory is by definition valuable (see Hemmings, 2005 for useful critique of affect along these lines).

Notions of excess exist in concert with 'virtuality', with affect as the link operating at the cusp of virtuality and actuality. It is this 'excessive' nature, Massumi's take on affect, that Ben Anderson (2006a, b) considers can be supplemented by the work of Ernst Bloch, as he offers a way of thinking of hope that Anderson views as capable of developing a specific empirical approach to affect in cultural geography, and one that is attuned to hope, although not in a pure or naïve sense. For Anderson, affect theory needs to be able to point to the inequalities in Western societies, and consequently address issues of sorrow,

depression and anxiety. However, it also needs to address these social worlds in terms of the empirical management of such negative experiences. It is here, with his Marxist leanings, that Bloch's work on hope as an 'excessive force' (through the concept of 'not yet') can be useful.

The notion of virtual forces introduces newness as a reality, in terms of virtuality framing a realm of new actualised forms being produced as part of ongoing processes of continuity. The idea of a continuous new is a point of concern for Bloch, which he finds with specific reference to Bergson, whose vitalism Bloch feels offers no more than an idea of the new. The notion of process and creativity moving forward is troublesome in Bloch's eyes, as if theory goes no further than to posit the new, without specifying any form of end point, or at least, a product of process. For instance, his concern with Bergson that 'process remains empty and repeatedly produces nothing but process' (1996, p. 201).

Bloch though was writing at a time before renewed engagements with process philosophies across social and cultural theory, in which concepts of virtuality and affect have re-emerged as concepts of change. As such, drawing links between contemporary affect theory and Bloch's writings could prove valuable. As we have seen, with a notion of process comes change, and it was this that was fundamental for Bloch, specifically in terms of change for the better, and it is his concept of hope that is central to his thinking of change. Similarly, the renewed focus on theories of affect has been criticised on the grounds that affect has become a fashionable term for introducing notions of ungrounded experience and moving away from common patterns of being, without offering much by way of replacement (Hemmings, 2005). This resonates with the 'not yet' nature of affect theory (Gregg and Seigworth, 2010), the 'excessive yet to be captured or organised into a knowable form' that emerges when one resists reducing experience down to pre-figured visible individualised forms. The question then becomes how to treat this 'not yet' element? It is here that a notion of excess and virtuality featured in Massumi's work on affect can be potentially augmented by Bloch's writings on hope, in terms of working towards a theory of a specific form of affect, namely affective hope.

### **The Not-Yet-Conscious**

Bloch's writings on hope feature as a central part of his philosophy of subjectivity. In *The Principle of Hope* (1995), Bloch's three-volume treatise, which was written over two decades – from 1938 to 1959 – and in two continents (Germany and America), he produces a profusion of theories and philosophises on human culture – from art to politics and from religion to science – that are obscure at times (to say the least) but also offer to the reader not just simply a work of literary interest, but also possible ways of thinking, feeling and mobilising subjectivity. His process theory appears much more positively future oriented than recent theorising in terms of directing thought towards new modes of hopeful being; and Bloch was quite hostile to his contemporary theorists who developed what he saw as nihilistic positions without any hope for the future of humanity.

Subjectivity for Bloch is regarded as an unfinished mode of being, much more related to verbs than any particular noun. It is constantly in a state of striving to know the self as the completion of its being lies in the future, its identity is hidden: the *homo absconditus* (Bloch, 1996). Subjectivity is seen to be built around what he calls the 'Not' that induces the hunger and striving (Bloch, 1976, p. 3). Although the Not for Bloch is fundamental to the concept of being

as unfinished and in process, the Not does not itself exist, for example, as it does in what he regards as nihilistic philosophies of nothingness, but is rather the negation of being. He sees the subject as attempting to reach forward, striving to fill the void of the Not: the negation of the negation, but satiation is always transitory and hungers again emerge. Bloch argues that it is hope (the dialectical agent of the Not) that leads the subject on in its attempt to uncover its hidden face. Thus, Bloch's understanding of the Not is part of his philosophy of process that emphasises and relies on a future reality of difference (as Deleuze would say), in which life becomes something it currently is not.

The point that demarcates Bloch's thought from the aforementioned process models of affect is that his is concerned to posit a particular mode of futurity, namely a more positive one that is created through the very sense of difference that a philosophy of 'not-yet' brings. For Bloch, the very notion of newness in the future is formed through subjectivities 'open to' the future, through which the new can be made in a better way. For this it relies on the existence of possibility, in terms of seeing better futures as emerging from present materiality of life. Hope becomes the method through which better possible futures are engaged with in the present, and as such are grounded in the possibilities of current individual and social environments, and it needs to be learned.

Hope for Bloch is not in any simple sense a type of feeling or dream of a better life, it is to be treated with reverence and at times equated with being itself. Anderson states, it is 'frequently likened to the immaterial-matter of air' (Anderson, 2006b, p. 733) and Giroux as 'anticipatory rather than messianic, mobilizing rather than therapeutic' (Giroux, 2004, p. 38). Bloch describes it as 'the most human of all mental feelings' (Bloch, 1996, p. 74), an 'anticipated freedom to be-for-oneself' (Bloch, 1976). Quoting Hegel, Bloch states that the subject in a state of freedom 'finds nothing alien and has no limits or barriers in that which confronts him, but rather finds himself' (ibid.), the content of hope lies where 'the absolute is no longer encumbered' (ibid., p. 7). Thus, hope is an affective state of anticipation, an anticipated movement towards that which is not-yet-become. It can be conceived as residing in what Massumi determines as the virtual sphere (excessive to a state of being), but importantly, it can also be actively engaged with and sought as it resides in potential (seed-like) form, as will be discussed.

Bloch makes a distinction between 'reality and what has become real' (Bloch, 1996, p. 157). What has become real is static, lacks potentiality and is unchangeable. Bloch refers to these kinds as only objectively possible. 'Objectively possible is everything whose entry, on the basis of a mere partial-cognition of its existing conditions, is scientifically to be expected or at least cannot be discounted' (Bloch, 1996, p. 196). These have 'fixed definitions of essence' (Bloch, 1996, p. 1373). What emerges as having become real, and in this respect Bloch concurs with Bergson, is thought of as impoverished perceptions of reality, 'snapshots' conceived through present needs and social contexts, or what may popularly be considered as facts or 'matters of fact'. Similarly, Massumi asserts that 'matter-of-factness dampens intensity' (Massumi, 1996, p. 86). In contrast, 'reality', for Bloch, belongs to the realm of the possible or what he calls the

really possible which is everything whose conditions in the sphere of the object itself are not yet fully assembled: whether because they are still maturing, or above all because new conditions – though mediated with the existing ones – arise for the entry of a new Real. (Bloch, 1996, p. 196)

The really possible occurs on the 'Front' of the not-yet, a site where present and future meet through 'Vor-Schein', an experience or a foreglow of future possibilities, utopian possibilities (Geoghegan, 1997, p. 37). These we might experience through, for example, works of art and religion. The emphasis on the power of the arts to produce new forms of experience, and consequently modes of subjectivity, also features in Gilles Deleuze's discussions on the originators of difference and the new: art and literature being capable of offering new forms of sensation, feeling and affectual connections, which in turn provide the productive constituents of subjectivity. The synergies of the thoughts of Bloch and Deleuze are strong here (and potentially offer a way forward from Bloch's earlier criticisms of Bergson). What is central to Bloch's desire for difference and the not-yet is that the future has the capacity to be better than the 'present-past'. Bloch's writings emerge from the wider context of utopian writings. He works this through a general understanding and focus on hope, to the creation of a specific concept tasked with offering a specific mode of subjectivity that recognises and engages with the future as offering experience beyond what is currently known, which he terms the *docta spes* (educated hope).

### **A Hopeful Surplus**

A major aspect of educated hope, it seems, for Bloch concerns the ability to distinguish between abstract (immature dreams) and concrete (mature dreams) forms of utopia. Abstract utopia is simply wishful thinking without any wilful application for change, whereas concrete utopia reaches forward hopefully and wilfully to real possible futures. Levitas suggests, '[W]hilst abstract utopia may express desire, only concrete utopia carries hope' (Levitas, 1997, p. 67). It is the process of extracting concrete hope from the abstract that produces the application of a *docta spes*: '[T]he task is to recover the core of concrete utopia from the dross of the abstract elements in which it is embedded' (Levitas, 1997, p. 71). The distinction between 'desire' and 'hope' bears a slight resemblance to Deleuze's notion of 'desire'. The way that Deleuze used the term denotes underlying affective processes that are non-conscious, rather than, for example, a conscious desire for financial wealth. The latter, for Deleuze, is more related to what is commonly termed 'interest' that provokes cognized rational processes, through which, for example, one becomes financially wealthy. Desire underlies the interest, but is subject to (invested in) the social formations or conditions under which the interest is made possible (for example, capitalism).

Desire, therefore for Deleuze, is never our own. It is produced through the conditions of the capitalist infrastructure in which we live, and so for Deleuze, desire is essentially schizophrenic. Bloch does not see hope in quite same way, but nonetheless, he felt it is conditioned through societal infrastructure and of course determines and influences activity. Bloch, however, adds that the investments that hope are attached to can be reformulated through the *docta spes*. The *docta spes* can be considered as a process of learning to be affected by hope and in turn affecting hope, an experimenting with an unfinished, open, not-yet-determined world. It is human performative practice in learning to decide which possible future is best actualised; this requires both a feelingful endeavour and a directing act of a cognitive kind (Levitas, 1997, p. 66). Bloch describes *docta spes* as 'a methodical organ for the New, an objective aggregate form of what is coming up' (Bloch, 1996, p. 157). Hence, Levitas argues that it 'operates as a dialectic between reason and passion' (Levitas, 1997, p. 70).

There have been a number of criticisms of Bloch's distinction between the abstract and concrete (Zipes, 1988; Levitas, 1997). Bloch has a tendency to label any philosophical positions that do not match up to his as irrational and bourgeois (Zipes, 1988). Levitas states that the *docta spes* is an intrinsically evaluative concept, 'which cannot be made other than through the specification of the content of the good society, and through judgments about the possibility and desirability of different aspirations toward the good life' (Levitas, 1997, p. 78). Kellner makes the point that Bloch's politicization of cultural critique forces one to make political evaluations of cultural artefacts, though one may make different judgements, and utilize different political perspectives, than Bloch (Kellner, 1997). Further, Anderson argues that there is an alternative, perhaps less dogmatic understanding of utopianism put forward throughout Bloch's work. It can be seen as 'a distinctive type of process in which something better is "not-yet" and thus has disruptive, excessive qualities' (Anderson, 2006a, p. 698) through which to attune 'to utopia as a distinctive type of process that opens up the present through plural, underdetermined, "goods" or "betters"' (Anderson, 2006a, p. 700). Levy argues that utopia for Bloch is not an end point or the ' "end" of all movement and development, but "end" as a future that opens up "endless" new possibilities y a potential realization of the possible' (Levy, 1997, p. 176). Similarly, Giroux writes:

Rather than seeing it as an individual proclivity, we must see hope as part of a broader politics that acknowledges those social, economic, spiritual, and cultural conditions in the present that make certain kinds of agency and democratic politics possible. (Giroux, 2004, p. 38)

Thus, Anderson (2006a, p. 707) suggests that Bloch's endeavour is calling for us to change the verb 'critical' in the context of analysis, which usually points to deconstruction, to 'utopic', which connotes an additional re-constructive process. For Bloch, then, it is the 'theory-practice of reaching home or of departure from inappropriate objectification; through it the world is developed towards the No-Longer-Alienation of its subjects-objects, hence towards freedom' (Bloch, 1996, p. 210). In addition, the move from abstract to concrete utopia could be seen as a process of actualising the virtual, formed through processes of selecting different modes of subjectivity. The way that experience comes to be as part of the wider virtual stream. This though would be to miss the utopic element of Bloch's work, namely the problem of what to make of a concept that emphasises change and potential (for a better life in Bloch's terms), and does so by spending considerable effort claiming that futures will be different to the past-present and are not determined by them. Bloch seeks to move beyond this ontology of difference through offering the concept of 'educated hope'. A concept tasked with creating a mode of making virtuality, without reducing it to actualised forms, which would be to negate its creative force.

We want to stress, however, that we are not offering Bloch's understanding of educated hope as a method in any dogmatic sense of the word, but it is more about a spirit, an attitude or an affective disposition. What Bloch seeks to do is to create an embodied mode of being that is hopeful, formed through affective engagement with the future world. In such a model, the affective architecture of the present organises itself in such a way as to promote hopeful surges into the future. The utopic tendencies of this position shine through Bloch's work, and yet, the emphasis on hopeful modes of somatic activity offers a potential model of subjectivity in relation to affect and virtuality that is grounded in the present.



It presents a notion of present-day organisation of somatic relationality in such a way that carves into the future with a hope for the better. Of course, suggesting the future will be better is a utopic enterprise. What Bloch does is to encourage a hopeful affective state, an idea that can usefully supplement engagements with affect that introduce a realm of ineffable change through notions of excess and virtuality.

Bloch's *docta spes* involves the dissolving of the relationship between psychological and social, through the relation of socio-cultural events and psychological activity, each stage in the process acting as a moment of inspiration that are bound up and produced as complex psychosocial phenomena. This is central to Bloch's futurity, through which he marks out a genuine new (*Novum*). Rather than the failings, as he sees them, of Bergson's process philosophy to create anything beyond process, Bloch endeavours to lay down a model of future production formed through educated hope, the full culmination of which he sees as occurring only at very special moments, formed through the combined forces of particular individuals and socio-cultural contexts. Bloch draws on history for evidence for this, for instance, Descartes's production of the *cogito ergo sum*, which occurred through the relation and combination of bourgeois society and a particular highly talented individual. The notion of the 'special moment' is one we take up in our version of collective educated hope, or affective hope, that we see currently in the rise of mass protest movements marking the present time as a very 'special' one in history.

### **Hope for Education and Educated Hope**

Our focus on hope is one that views it as a tentative, unfinished process. Something that is created as a force between bodies, shifting the bodies' capacity to be affected and to affect. By way of an example of this process, we would like to consider the recent protests in the United Kingdom against Government cuts to Higher Education funding. Such cuts revolve around an increase in student fees, and have been the subject of several protest marches in the centre of London in the winter of 2010. We would like to consider this example of these protests in terms of the embodied subjectivity produced by the police crowd containment strategy known colloquially as 'kettling'. This strategy was used in the later protests in 2010 as a means to contain thousands of protestors in the Parliament Square area of central London, directly in front of the Houses of Parliament. This tactic involves the prevention of movement in and out of the containment area, which is enforced by hundreds of police with 'riot gear' (that is, batons, helmets and shields). Most protestors caught up in the 'kettling' were not prepared to be 'kettled', and were shocked, scared and angry to find themselves enforcedly restricted by police for several hours on a cold winter's night, with no food, water or sanitation facilities provided.

This restricted space can be thought of as a multiple relational production of connections between the bodies of protestors and police. Affect is not a pre-figured happening in the contained space, but could name the variation in what the bodies can and cannot do in that particular time and space. The potentially positive affectual experience of feeling one can make a difference through protest occurring earlier in the march shifting to the intimidated fearful experience of being subject to forceful entrapment upon containment in Parliament Square. As Massumi notes, affect is not residing within any of the subjects of objects present, such as the protestors, police, batons, shields or the contained space itself, but is the processes of variation through which life

emerges at that time. As such, it is pre-personal (subjects being products of it rather than producers of it), and excessive (it does not reside within subjects of objects).

Hope exists as an affective force on the earlier march as the collective embodied coming together to attempt to successfully resist the proposed cuts to funding. Hope is set amid the anger and despair of the funding cuts, and hence is not a 'pure' form of positivity. It is intrinsically linked to negative affects, but it is nevertheless a means through which collective protest emerges at that space and time. It is not a property of the protestors as individuals, but a relational embodied product that forms the collective. Later on, when faced with the reality of being 'kettled' for several hours on a very cold winter's night, the mood changes, with anger, fear and intimidation felt by protestors, leading to some altercations with police. Such reactions become alternative forms of hope connected to the negative reactions of anger and fear. Hope here becomes not about trying to successfully resist proposed cuts, but of leaving a sudden unexpected and sometimes brutal imprisonment in Parliament Square. The organisation of hope changes scale, from the level of parliamentary legislation to localised spatial escape. The situation is primed for change. For instance, a small group of protestors charge what they perceive to be a weakness in the police line and break through, darting through the garden of the Ministry of Defence government building and climbing over railings to ensure their freedom. This is embodied hope achieving a potential.

This demonstrates a specific example of hope as an 'excessive' embodied relational affectual subjectivity. Not about the individual's stable emotional engagement with external events, but as multiple processes of variation. Hope is seen as the fluid movement between affectual experiences that are indelibly bound up in frustration, anger and sadness at the proposed cuts to funding, and works as an organising force for collective embodied protest. The later 'kettling' shifts the affective landscape further, combining concerns regarding the potential debt of future generations of students with fear for the personal safety and comfort of protestors. Hope for successfully resisting legislative change shifts to hope for an escape from police containment.

Bloch was clear that educated hope is something that is learned. The anti-funding cuts demonstrations can be seen as an education in hope for many young people (for example, current secondary-school children, young students) who had not experienced such proposed changes to the fiscal landscape as their lives to date coincide with a period of economic growth. The demonstrations were then initially driven by a hope for education, a new force in the sociopolitical landscape. It was a hope fuelled by both passionate and cognizant awareness of the potential for developing better futures. For Bloch, this is a concretisation of hope as it is embodied as activity seeking better futures. Therefore, the demonstration by definition cannot be conceived as simply wishful thinking, but wilful application.

Bloch would urge us to look at the positive trajectories that have spun out, and other not-yet realised possibilities. For example, the collective resistance may be suggestive of new forms of political consciousness emerging among the students. Many of the very young students (some of them were of school age) had never attended a demonstration before, let alone been kettled. Prophetic chants of 'this is just the beginning' could be heard, representing for Bloch the Vor-Schein (a foreglow of future possibilities). Versions of educated

hope as collective organisational forms of subjectivity are emerging across the globe at the time of writing. The protest movement against cuts to Higher Education funding has spread to protests against tax avoidance by companies in the United Kingdom. Across the Middle East anti-dictator pro-democracy movements have spread from Tunisia, through Egypt and Bahrain to Libya (and promise to continue), toppling long-standing dictators. Such protest movements against all powerful leaders would have been unthinkable until very recent times, due to the threat of violence against anyone speaking out against the ruling regime. New forms of hope are being learned as we speak across the world, and as such, now is an apt time to introduce Bloch's work to help us understand them, due to his own role in the mass protests of 1968 (Kellner and O'Hara, 1976).

### **Virtuality, Educated Hope and Future Subjectivities**

The process of attempting to 'make the future' that Bloch states is central to achieving a better future is woven around the notion of 'educated hope'. This is not a process of actualising the virtual in Massumi's terms, but of forging a way of a passionate engaging in the present that is cognizant of the reality of the burgeoning excess of the future, driven by hope for a better life. What distinguishes this from an actualisation of the virtual per se is that it is not about forming selective, yet stable, actualised forms of subjectivity (that is, emotions), that then form the base of psychological activity, but rather for a mode of hope to act as a constant and incessant presence that drives our strivings forward (for example, as seen in the proliferation and force of protest movements across the globe). The emphasis on excess and the unknowable in Massumi's theory of affect offers a valuable re-focusing on change, but does not offer a particular mode of futurity in the way Bloch does. Educated hope is about accessing the openness of virtuality, to constantly create modes of subjectivity that are 'open oriented', not selective processes from a wider excess of potential.

What does this mean for subjectivity? For Bloch subjectivity is constantly made through opening itself to better possible futures, with this striving for the new and improved both coming from a realisation of a reality of better possible futures, and in turn making better possible futures. For Bloch, this is a circular process. A desire and a production of activity seems a valuable task for critical theory, and guards against accusations of over-negativity of critical (and deconstructive) modes of engagement. Bloch's 'openness' to the new combines here to form subjectivities that are forward-facing and open to the new, with the addition of a striving for the future. Anderson's (2006a, b) belief that an engagement with Bloch can act as a force for directing a utopic rather than critical geography is a point we would follow in relation to social theory more generally. Such efforts have found theories of affect useful resources for this, and yet, can fall foul of the transcendental trap of alluding to a realm of ineffable virtuality through a notion of excess. Bloch's educated hope can form a catalysing influence on critical theory in understandings of subjectivity: first, in positing a version of subjectivity that is process oriented, 'virtual' and yet not lost in a necessary unbidden excess, or actuality; and second, to forge modes of critical theory that garner a version of critique that is more utopic than purely critical: a move beyond deconstruction towards a forward-facing and open re-construction. Where such moves will end cannot be known (and as such they remain excessive), but the notion of educated hope can potentially point to the power of learning to hope as a collective embodied practice, a form of affective hope. This is of course a tricky balance,

for re-construction implies some kind of structural (re)formation of subjects. Nevertheless, a goal of continually theorising 'open subjectivities' is well assisted by an engagement with Bloch.

The notion of 'excess' in work on affect by Massumi, influenced by Spinoza, Bergson and Deleuze, which we identify as both an attraction and a problem area, can be productively augmented by Bloch's educated hope. By excess, we mean the premise that psychological experience and activity are produced through processes of selection on an ongoing basis from a wider set of possible relations. As such, an excess of affective possibilities is posited as constantly present, and it is through the relation between virtual and actual forces that subjectivities are formed. This can be an attraction as a notion of 'excess' introduces change as an analytic, although, on the other hand, it can raise a problem of introducing a realm of unspecified 'unknown'. Doing the latter without falling into a transcendental trap and/or consequently suggesting that future experience is somehow dependent on a realm of excessive unknown is a challenging task. We seek to demonstrate how an approach informed by Bloch can begin to address this.

Specifically, it is the concept of hope that will provide fertile in terms of marking out a theory of 'affective hope'. This theory puts hope forward as an affective activity whereby reason and passion are drawn upon to develop the power to be affected by hope in the present and hence the ability to positively affect possible futures.

Bloch's philosophy of hope introduces an interesting potential avenue forward for affective theories of subjectivity, first in terms of aligning to ideas of process and newness of the future, pointing to how it can be made differently. The links here to ideas of virtuality and excess are fruitful, with Bloch arguing against previous incarnations that he saw as lacking concrete ideas and versions of the new. For Bloch, just theoretically laying out process is not a viable way of creating a genuine new, one not reducible to past or present. The push to hope and incumbent factors of hoping for a better future are admirable and welcome. An integral part of critical theory should always be a sense of improvement, which is central to Bloch's writings. For this reason, a contemporary engagement with them is worth exploring. The notion of constantly producing 'open subjectivities' appears valuable, although a question remains about the relationship between virtuality and possibility. If, as Bloch states, the future is entirely bound to the possibilities of the present, it can mean that the future is no different from the present: '[W]hat difference can there be between the existent and the non-existent if the non-existent is already possible' (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p. 263). The argument follows that if the future is already possible it is not genuinely different from the present, as it already exists in the present as a possibility.

To be genuinely new (which Bloch was attempting), the future must exceed the possible, and consequently not already exist as a possibility. Massumi (2002) takes up this point in stating '[T]he actual occurs at the point of intersection of the possible, the potential, and the virtual: three modes of thought' (p. 136). It is within this three-form model that we argue Bloch's educated hope can stand. Massumi is suggesting that the actuality of (new) future modes of being emerge through the combination of possibility, potentiality and virtuality. Such a formulation offers a way of integrating Bloch's 'hopeful possibility' with process models of futurity emphasising genuine newness through virtuality. For subjectivity, this can mean that hope as an affectual relation can exist as a possibility, working in line with virtuality

as an open system towards the new. The protests movements altering geopolitical landscapes across the world provide ample evidence of new forms of collective affective hope at work. Perhaps then it is the time for a new politics of change to emerge.

## References

- Anderson, B. (2006a) 'Transcending without transcendence': Utopianism and an ethos of hope. *Antipode* 38(4): 691–710.
- Anderson, B. (2006b) Becoming and being hopeful: Towards a theory of affect. *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 24(5): 733–752.
- Blackman, L. and Cromby, J. (2007) Affect and feeling. *International Journal of Critical Psychology* 21: 5–22.
- Blackman, L., Cromby, J., Hook, D., Papadopoulos, D. and Walkerdine, V. (2008) Editorial: Creating subjectivities. *Subjectivity* 22(1): 1–27.
- Bloch, E. (1976) Dialectics of hope. *New German Critique* 9: 3–10.
- Bloch, E. (1996/1959) *The Principle of Hope: Volumes 1, 2 and 3*, Translated by N. Plaice, S. Plaice and P. Knight. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press.
- Brown, S.D. and Tucker, I.M. (2010) Sensation and somatic management. In: M. Gregg and G. Seigworth (eds.) *The Affect Reader*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Clough, P. (2007) *The Affective Turn: Theorising the Social*. New York: Duke University Press.
- Clough, P. (2008) (De) coding the subject-in-affect. *Subjectivity* 23(1): 140–155.
- Deleuze, G. and Guattari, F. (1994) *What is Philosophy?* New York: Columbia University Press.
- Frosh, S. (2008) Elementals or affects, or making contact with others. *Subjectivity* 24(1): 314–324.
- Geoghegan, E. (1997) Remembering the future. In: J. Daniel and T. Moylan (eds.) *Not Yet: Reconsidering Ernst Bloch*. London: Verso, pp. 15–32.
- Giroux, H.A. (2004) When hope is subversive. *Tikkun* 19(6): 38–39.
- Gregg, M. and Seigworth, G. (eds.) (2010) *The Affect Reader*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.
- Hallward, P. (2006) *Out of This World: Deleuze and the Philosophy of Creation*. London: Verso.
- Hemmings, C. (2005) Invoking affect: Cultural theory and the ontological turn. *Cultural Studies* 19(5): 548–567.
- Kellner, D. (1997) Ernst Bloch, utopia, and ideology critique. In: J. Daniel and T. Moylan (eds.) *Not Yet: Reconsidering Ernst Bloch*. London: Verso, pp. 80–95.
- Kellner, D. and O'Hara, H. (1976) Utopia and Marxism in Ernst Bloch. *New German Critique* 9: 11–34.
- Levitas, R. (1997) Educated hope: Ernst Bloch on abstract and concrete utopia. In: J. Daniel and T. Moylan (eds.) *Not Yet: Reconsidering Ernst Bloch*. London: Verso, pp. 65–79.
- Levy, Z. (1997) Utopia and reality in the philosophy of Ernst Bloch. In: J. Daniel and T. Moylan (eds.) *Not Yet: Reconsidering Ernst Bloch*. London: Verso, pp. 175–185.
- Massumi, B. (1995) The autonomy of affect. *Cultural Critique* 2(31): 83–109.
- Massumi, B. (2002) *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press.
- Spinoza, B. (1996) *Ethics*. London: Penguin.
- Venn, C. (2009) Identity, diasporas and subjective change: The role of affect, the relation to the other, and the aesthetic. *Subjectivity* 26(1): 3–28.
- Zipes, J. (1988) Ernst Bloch and the obscurity of hope. *New German Critique* 45: 3–9.