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An Exploration of the Concept Utopia
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Preface

Before embarking on the exploration of the concept utopia, I would like to offer a few words of gratitude to those who have supported me throughout my studies in Philosophy at the Erasmus University. Considering the circumstances in which I write these words, I would like to thank first my supervisor Prof. Dr. Wiep van Bunge and my advisor Dr. Tim de Mey, for their continued support and insightful comments. Additionally, I am forever in debt to Leonieke Baerwaldt, for reasons of which she is most aware: her willingness to listen undeterred to my continuous rants on utopia and Ernst Bloch, and for her moral support throughout. This extends to my best friend Robin Claushuis.

Special thanks to Prof. Dr. Ingrid Robeyns who challenged and supported me throughout my master's program, and Dr. Awee Prins for his unwavering engagement and inspiration. Additionally, I would like to mention Linda Degener for making it a pleasure to be at the faculty, and Manon Geluk for giving me the benefit of the doubt on more occasions that I dare to mention.

This selfsame reason for gratitude extends to my family; my parents Gerrit and Tilly Ruitinga, my brother Robert-Jan and his fiancée Alana, my sisters Charlotte and Sunee. I hope that you can all be as proud of my efforts as I am of all of yours. It strikes me that none of us children have ever strayed far from the study of social questions, so I would call this thesis my expression of our common engagement. Hopefully you all enjoy reading my thesis as I much as I enjoyed writing it.

On that note one final word; contrary to my observations of many fellow students, I have not tired of my thesis topic. If anything, my exploration of utopia has provided me with a deeper understanding of an idea that has pervaded my thoughts and influenced my choices in many forms for some time. In studying philosophy, I have been given the tools and concepts with which I can begin to understand and form opinion on some of life's most fundamental questions, with which I am gladly preoccupied. To start, this involved exploring questions of free-will and theology. Then, with a philosophical opinion of what it is to be a person in this world, I could begin to extrapolate to the social. Subsequently, with a deep seeded desire to change the world for the better, I have become fascinated with utopia. In conclusion, I am most thankful for having been given the opportunity to develop my interests so thoroughly.

Introduction

There are as many different ways of looking at our world as there are people in it. Common to all is the endeavour to understand and give meaning to our lives. This existential struggle can consume all of our time in an effort to discover the deepest secrets of the self. But the recognition of the complexity of the self comes paired with, and is mirrored by, the infinite complexity of the external world. Thus, not only are we called to find our own place in it, we are aware of the fact that we are but one self amongst many, facing this same trial. In accepting this reality, we begin to understand the interconnectedness of individuals, our common engagement and interdependence. We are part of a larger system, an intricate society that both restricts our freedom and yet provides us with great opportunities.

In this structure that transcends our 'selves', we recognise that our welfare is dependent on others, and conversely, that their welfare is, in part, dependent on us. Thus, we may choose to accept the responsibility not only of securing our own well-being, but also of facilitating the well-being of others. Although this may take many forms, ranging from providing a family meal to protecting the environment, every such meaningful action has in common the goal of improving a world beyond the self.

Every individual wants the world to change for the better; most not only for themselves, but also for others. Often, this want can become more than a desire alone and transforms into hope; hope for real change, for a different possible world in our future. This hope can inspire action and a determination to effect the imagined change. It is the conception of that imagined change that has sparked my interest. Not only the idea that we should want a better world, nor even how we should work toward achieving it, but the very fact that this endeavour requires some conception of the imagined change. This hope that inspires us must take some form, be comprised of some substance, present some image. And when our view is beyond the self, when the subject of this desire is society as a whole, this picture has often been referred to as *utopia*.

Thus, besides recognising these utopian dreams, it is important to study the phenomenon itself. The want for betterment seems such an inalienable human activity that in our efforts to understanding it, we can hope to gain some insight into human nature itself. As every person has these dreams of a better world, the sources of utopia are extremely varied. Moreover, as they pertain to an infinitely complex world, the image of these dreams is never once the same. Add to this the ever changing world, and the ever changing self, through time, and what we are left with is a concept so varied that it is practically impossible to completely comprehend.

However, in examining the phenomenon, we can attempt to conceptualise the causes of the unceasing dream as well as its product. It is the study of the latter with which I am most concerned. In this, we can ask what forms do these visions take, what functions do they fulfil? Are they all of equal value, or are some preferable to others? How do we make these distinctions, and to what end?

With this thesis I want to start the exploration of the concept utopia from scratch. I want to answer the questions raised above in order to gain insight into this fantastic human activity. To this end, the first chapter of this thesis will be devoted to the preliminary exploration of the field of utopian studies. As a guide, I will take Ruth Levitas' work *The Concept Utopia*, in order to sketch the broad outlines of the field. Levitas sets out to categorise previous definitions of utopia in terms of content, form and function by examining established works on utopia and identifying many common features or characteristics. She concludes with her own definition of Utopia, which is highly inclusive; the basis of which is the idea that all utopias are expressions of desire.

With an initial understanding of the concept utopia, I find that those motivated to write and study utopias can be divided into two opposing groups. On one side, there are those scholars who

wish only to comment on utopia, and insert no value judgements of their own. On the other side, there are those that necessarily wish to explicate their personal programs of social change or opinions on utopian possibility. The former point of view will be called 'descriptive utopianism', the latter 'prescriptive utopianism'.

Thus, it becomes clear that there is a marked difference in approach. In chapter two, I look at the basis of an active engagement in prescriptive utopianism, by examining the possibility of human progress. In this, I ask if there is a need for, or even the possibility of a hope for a better world. I find that the progress of mankind is possible, and argue that a belief in this possibility is crucial for our well-being.

With this, I aim to look more closely to the consequences of holding such a belief for the conception of utopia. Thus, in chapter three, I examine the conception of a utopia based on the belief that one must want to change the world and take an active stance in this endeavour. To this end, I look more closely at the project of prescriptive utopianism.

After outlining the consequences of this motive to utopianism, I want to examine an established prescriptive utopian theory, to follow more closely how such a project may be shaped. In this context, I look at the work of Ernst Bloch, in particular his magnum opus *The Principle of Hope*. Herein I discover an extensive methodological and epistemological justification for a prescriptive utopia, which contributes both new concepts to my understanding of utopia and a myriad of examples of the forms in which the utopian presents itself. In particular, the distinction between abstract and concrete utopia provides a useful conceptual tool: the former being the product of fleeting daydreams, the latter offering real hope of change.

With this more complete picture of the concept utopia, I proceed in chapter five to an overview of the domain. Herein I re-examine the inter-relation of the concepts described in the previous chapters, and come to the conclusion that there is one type of utopia that is ill represented, i.e.; those utopias that examine the compatibility of abstract theoretical concepts and values such as equality, egoism, altruism or the right to private ownership. These 'theoretical utopias' are not necessarily abstract, nor concrete, and thus represent a third possibility. With this, I am able to delineate three dimensions that allow us to compare utopias; these represent the extent to which a utopia is comprised of a theoretical element, a practical element and an element of fantasy. In addition, I recognise in the final chapter the added complexity of the dimension of time, and comment on the consequences of its addition.

So this thesis is at heart an exploration of the concept utopia. I wish to provide both an overview of some of the major concepts involved in the study of utopia, and the consequences of the decision to engage in prescriptive utopianism or to have the desire of wanting to effect real change in our world. I hope to succeed in providing some insight into what I have described as an infinitely complex field.

Chapter 1

Hope & Desire

An introduction to the study of utopia

The first step in providing a defensible definition of utopia is to explore and categorise analogous efforts. Even though the field of utopian studies is comparatively young, there have been many efforts ranging from Lyman Tower Sargent's layman guide *utopianism: A Very Short Introduction* to the encyclopaedic compendium that is the Manuels' *utopian Thought in the Western World*. A more appropriate guide for my exploration is *The Concept of Utopia* by Ruth Levitas, which offers a concise overview of numerous previous efforts to categorise utopias and concludes with her own contribution. In this chapter, I will survey her summary of the domain, which will provide a theoretical backdrop for the subsequent chapters, starting with her classification in terms of content, form and function. I will add comments on further aspects that relate to utopias in general. Finally, I will remark on Levitas' conclusion that *desire* is the fundamental element of utopian thought and suggest a new way of categorising approaches to utopia; adding a critical note and outlining some of the consequences of this decision.

1. Content, Form & Function

In her exploration of existing definitions of utopia, Ruth Levitas identifies three distinct categories: content, form and function. Each of these can be identified as primary to various definitions. The first applies when utopias are considered on the basis of the substance of which they are comprised. Content is often that which is most enticing, offering a glimpse of a better world, and begging the question: could this be the sought after ideal state of mankind? But content is subjective, a matter of personal taste, socially and historically determined. Definitions of utopia in terms of content tend to be evaluative and normative. In short, although ultimately content is of the utmost importance, it does not serve as a useful tool to categorise utopias.

Form has been employed more successfully as a device of differentiation. Here we refer to the elements that constitute utopia, the description of a good society or utopia as a model. This approach has been used to argue that utopia is a literary genre 'involving the fictional depiction of an alternative society in some detail'[1]. Furthermore, most all discussion of utopia contains reference to form.

The third approach places function as central to the demarcation question. Here, Levitas points out, we move away from the colloquial understanding of utopia. Definitions in terms of function often assign some goal to works of utopia, for instance: utopias can be said to function as 'constructive criticism', or 'social transformation'. Proponents of this approach represent this function in many different ways.

Levitas primarily discusses definitions in terms of form and function. She identifies two tendencies; the liberal-humanist tradition that often defines utopia in terms of form, and the Marxist tradition which generally defines utopia in terms of function. In what follows I will discuss

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[1]   Levitas, R. (2011) 'The Concept of Utopia', Peter Lang Ltd., p.5

examples of both traditions in order to delineate the scope of the debate and demonstrate the application of the distinction made. Moreover, this will improve both our understanding of Levitas' own definition of utopia, and our understanding of the domain in general.

1.1 Utopia as Form

Initially, Levitas introduces a number of authors that discuss utopia in terms of form. She returns, however, to Davis' *Utopia and the Ideal Society*, calling it 'one of the most interesting attempts at a definition in terms of form'[2]. His approach is compelling as it differentiates between ideal societies by virtue of their solution to the scarcity gap, i.e., the incongruity between unlimited wants and our (in)ability to wholly satisfy them.

Davis identifies four categorical solutions which are employed in 'ideal societies', and a fifth that he labels utopia. The first is appropriately called *Cockaygne*, after the fabled land of plenty. This vision remedies the scarcity issue by facilitating the satisfaction of unlimited wants. The second is called *Arcadia*: here there is only natural abundance, and the scarcity problem is solved by limiting human wants to those which nature affords. Here there is an inherent distinction between true and false wants in terms of whether they are easily satisfied by what is on offer. The third form, the *perfect moral commonwealth*, mediates the problem via moral reformation. Here, the individual is so enlightened that he does not want what the system cannot deliver. This differs from *Arcadia* in that *Arcadia* can satisfy all the individuals 'true' wants, whereas in the moral commonwealth the individual *wants* only what he can have on moral grounds. The fourth category is *Millennium*, which is unique in that it describes 'those movements in which there is an expectation of, and preparation for, the coming period of supernatural bliss'[3]. This idea suggests resolution by *Deus ex machine*, such as a belief in the immanent second coming of Christ.

The final form, as posited by Davis, is *utopia proper*. This category prioritizes *realisability* relative to all other conditions. According to Davis, the utopian accepts man's struggle and seeks to alleviate the resulting tension to the best of its ability. Above all, utopia proper accepts the human condition and therefore designs the perfect social and political structures. Thus, utopia is 'distinguished by its approach to the collective problem and its vision of a total, perfect, ordered, environment'[4].

This vision of the definition of utopia is indeed illuminating, however Levitas is right to reject it by attacking the thesis of the scarcity gap: 'such a gap cannot simply be taken as given, since needs and wants themselves are socially constructed...'[5]. Nevertheless, the account is a valued example of defining utopia in terms of form, a strategy which entails certain benefits not lightly forgone.

1.2 Utopia as Function

As has been said, utopia as function, deviates from the colloquial norm. This issue revolves around the question whether the function of utopia is to instigate change. (Be it social, economic, moral, etc.) With function in mind, we come to ask such questions as: does utopia facilitate transformation and is it in itself essential to social transformation? Many commentators of utopia have, to a great extent, affirmed the three preceding questions. These include Mannheim, Ricoeur and Bloch. But Levitas discusses the utopian thesis of Zygmunt Bauman to illustrate a definition of

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[2] Idem., p. 185
[3] Worsley, P. (1968) 'The Trumpets Shall Sound: a study of 'cargo' cults in Melanesia', Schocken Books, p.12
[4] Davis, J. C. (1981) 'Utopia and the Ideal Society', Cambridge University Press, p. 39
[5] Levitas., p. 188

utopia in terms of function. Bauman argues that utopias fulfil an important and constructive role in the historical process, and describes its function as fourfold: 1. utopias relativize the present, offering an alternative to the present state of being which so often seems immutable; 2. they are an aspect of culture in which the potential of the present is explored in the question 'what may I hope?', a question which Bauman borrows from Bloch; 3. utopias relativize the future, and; 4. utopias influence action. Additionally, Bauman 'regards the function(s) of utopia as the prime concern and thus as the defining characteristic of what is utopian'[6].

Of course the different functional definitions of utopia vary significantly. Some are concerned with the inherent power of utopias to mobilize the people politically[7]. Others, such as Bloch, see utopia as an example for society. Others still, tend to view utopia as the presentation of an ideal alternative with the function of constructive criticism[8]. One may even say that utopias are nothing more than fairy-tales, which happen to have a similar object, and function only as light entertainment[9]. Significantly however, these definitions share a common feature; that of assigning utopia a function, which characterises a certain strategy of defining utopia and which will be shown to have significant consequences for its further use.

2. Other Issues Relating to the Debate

The three categories introduced above provide a useful familiarity with the debate. However, they are only labels unto the definitions of utopia. Thus, although they may reveal a great deal about a particular definition, there are many other distinguishing elements common to most utopias. Each of the following issues is of interest to what we have thusfar colloquially defined as utopia, namely: some description of a good society. There are many more, but a comprehensive assessment of all the elements of utopia is beyond the scope of this thesis. Below are several prominent overlapping components which will later be used to highlight the consequences of the diverging approaches.

2.1 Space

Throughout history, utopias have had a special relationship with space. There has been an incredible range of places where supposed utopias were found. A common conception places utopia on an island far out at sea, see for example *Atlantis* or some conceptions of *Eden*. Of course, the island could also be located near land, possibly as a former peninsula, as in More's *Utopia*. But there are many other spaces occupied by utopia. Telemachus tells of *Bœtica* which is said to be in Spain. Likewise, old Chinese tales of a mythical land of peace and enlightenment are located through and beyond deep caves and caverns such as Tao Yüan-ming's *The Peach Blossom Spring*. Some modern utopian literature sees the ideal society come about before our very eyes, for instance, B.F. Skinner's *Walden Two* is situated in the heart of rural America. Conversely, there have also been efforts to locate utopia in outer space, see for example Vance's *Big Planet*.
Thus the range of places which may accommodate utopia is seemingly endless. Far from being inconsequential, locations can reveal a great deal about the literature. For instance, placing utopia on an unconquerable island created a sense of security for contemporary readers of More's Utopia, whilst bolstering its credibility or believability. A similar observation applies to Walden

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[6]   Idem., p. 197
[7]   See: Kumar, K. (1987) 'Utopia and Anti-Utopia in Modern Times, B. Blackwell, &; Bauman, Z. (1976) 'Socialism: The Active Utopia', Allen & Unwin
[8]   See: Goodwin, B. & Taylor, K. (2009) 'The Politics of Utopia', Peter Lang AG
[9]   In this way Utopia defined in terms of function can be reduced to a literary genre.

Two, wherein utopia is placed within the American homeland, thus retaining a sense of pride and possibility in the United States and of the American dream, for in a globalised world a utopia in Spain would be unflattering to American superiority. Conversely, other utopias are necessarily located in unreachable places, on a distant planet or beyond mystical barriers. These qualities in turn frame utopia in a different light. The former professing one of future possibility, the latter presenting a much more allegorical account.

2.2 Time

Likewise, the temporal characteristics of utopia have varied greatly and are highly significant. Some utopias have been placed in the past and may have suffered a fall from grace, possible presenting some moral or warning to mankind. Others are conceived to exist in the present, often taking the form of political commentary. More's *Utopia*, Telemachus' *Bœtica* and Skinner's *Walden Two* were each ´real´ in their time. This undoubtedly adds a great sense of achievability to the account. Yet others are placed in the future. This element in particular creates a sense of direction, of progress that is to be strived for, an element that emerged in the 17th century wherein the industrialisation of the west, the growing means of production and the excitement of human potential all contributed to the emergence of a new kind of utopia[10]. As Levitas remarks: 'it is from this point that utopias are temporally rather than spatially located, at least in real time'. This is a significant development in the way we view the utopian project, which undoubtedly has significant consequences on its definition (which will be discussed in detail below).

utopias set in the past often require conservative tendencies to recreate; utopias set in the present spark wonder and amusement yet come paired with an element of failure as somewhere someone else has already achieved the ideal and you have been left out; whilst utopias set in the future instil a sense of potential in the reader, an assignment to change the world we live in now, a cry for social transformation.

2.3 Utopia as a Possible World

This inherent potential realisability of future utopias makes for an apt segue to the question of real possibility. Note that we are not merely discussing an alternative world; for where an alternative world is open to a myriad of fantasies, possible worlds are constrained by reality. A possible world thus entails the confrontation with problems of nature in general and human nature in particular. In order for utopia to be reachable, it must deal realistically with these challenges. As we have seen, the tension between nature and human nature leads Davis to distinguish between utopias in terms of their respective strategies of dealing with the scarcity gap. *Cockaygne, Arcadia, the perfect moral commonwealth* and the *Millennial* beliefs are all unsatisfactory because they are unrealistic. This reveals a basic desire for real change, for possibility and for implementability; ends which are not served, or ill-served, by unrealistic societies. Moreover, if utopia carries a functional definition that involves such values as 'constructive social criticism' as Barbara Goodwin advocates or 'the education of hope' as in Bloch, being a possible world becomes imperative lest the function be unattainable.

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[10]   See Davis (1981)

2.4 *Social Transformation*

Other commentators of utopia go even further than the requirement of real possibility. They claim that utopia must inspire political action, or social transformation. One of the strictest versions comes from the hand of Mannheim, who defined utopia 'in terms of the idea which, on passing into action, transforms the world and thus required utopia to be successful'[11]. Others, like Bauman, reject this far reaching conclusion but maintain that utopia does inspire social transformation. Nevertheless, a consequence of the need for social transformation has led some, like Krishan Kumar, to reject new novels of utopia that concentrate on the private or inner world, and thus are unable to perform the ascribed function of social transformation. Furthermore, both he and Bauman are concerned with the modern inability of utopias to enter popular consciousness and mobilize people politically. When one is concerned with the real possibility of utopia, such ideas strike at the heart of the pessimism felt amongst certain theorists of utopian studies as they result in the exclusion of much that is often considered utopian. This is a problem often, but not exclusively, attributed to functional definitions.

2.5 *The Collective Problem: Universality and the Human Condition*

One of the reasons why political mobility may be thought important is because in striving for utopia one must face the collective problem. More than merely the scarcity gap, it encompasses the entirety of the tension between man and nature. This issue relates both to utopia as a possible world and the issue of universality. It seems unsatisfactory to design an ideal society that would only be so for certain individuals. Not enough to promote the welfare of man whilst subjugating women for example; like in *Cockaygne,* where the woman's flesh is constantly available to man. The collective problem must have a collective solution, lest the position of individuals be unequal. However, utopia need not include all of mankind, as we see in More, but it must have the potential of universality. Its solution must deal with the collective problem, and is therefore potentially implementable by and for all.

The collective problem has also been referred to under the heading: human nature. There has always been much discussion concerning human nature. Is there a sense of nature beyond our most basic physiological requirements? Are all other needs beyond this merely cultural, or is the cultural inherently human and therefore part of our nature? These questions shape the way we view the world and thus shape the way we design utopia. But, the point is that since there is some basic nature that we all share, that connects us, that makes us human, the set of problems that results from this nature, is by definition collective.

A thorough definition of utopia must address all of the issues above, whether it is classified as based on content, form or function. And as we shall see, certain decisions concerning these aspects have far reaching consequences for the conception of utopia, while each decision entails yet further questions. One conception that addresses most, if not all of the issues raised above is that of Ruth Levitas, and as the preceding introduction to the debate on utopian definition was compiled largely with reference to her work, *The Conception of Utopia*, I will now discuss her conclusions.

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[11]   Levitas (2011), p. 196

3. Levitas´ Proposal

Levitas´ overview of the field demonstrates that there are many conceptions of utopia, cutting across various demarcations. We find a broad functional definition in the work of Ernst Bloch. Davis proposes a narrow definition in terms of form. In turn, we find that Mannheim holds a narrow definition in terms of function. All differ from the broad colloquial usage of utopia which relies on form or even content. This plethora of possibilities leads Levitas to the view that `narrow definitions in terms of content or form or function are all undesirable; that any definition must be able to incorporate a wide range of forms, functions and contents; and that therefore a broad definition is essential'[12].

Thus, Levitas sets out to find a definition that is highly inclusive. To this end, she asks the question, what lies at the heart of utopias or why indeed do they arise? Initially, she arrives at the plausible conception that utopia is simply a 'possible world', but quickly rejects this idea as it is too restrictive, taking into account that the same functions of criticism or compensation present in possible worlds, can be fulfilled by *im*possible worlds. Furthermore, she remarks that a possible world definition, conflates the concepts of hope and desire: 'it limits utopia to the question 'what may I hope?', and refuses the question 'what may I dream?'[13]. As such, she invokes the land of *Cockaygne,* which in no sense can be hoped for, yet it many ways can be desired. If we wish to include the land of *Cockaygne* as utopian, hope alone does not suffice as the founding principle of utopia. Thus in her search for the common denominator of utopias, Levitas identifies *desire* as the most inclusive criterion.

In support of her claim, we can see that all the categories of ideal societies rejected by Davis *can* be included as utopia under the definition that they spring from desire. Furthermore, she argues that the distinction between hope and desire is additionally illustrated by the location of utopias. Some believe that utopia is necessarily located in the future, revealing a tendency to replace desire with hope as the founding principle. But, Levitas points out, many early utopias are located in a distant space, not a distant time. She goes on to say that a definition in terms of desire goes beyond that of an alternative world, possible or otherwise, for two reasons: 1. the pursuit of a better way of life may not involve the alteration of external conditions, but may be spiritual, and 2. the definition is intended to be analytic and not descriptive, meaning: utopia is not defined in terms of form but neither is it limited to a specific function[14].

Thus, in her search, Levitas ends up with a single constitutive feature on the basis of which utopia can be identified. Levitas argues that 'we should be encouraging the pursuit of more and different questions relating to this process of imagining, not attempting to impose orthodoxy'[15]. But, although this results in a highly inclusive definition, sympathetic to many kinds of ideal societies, it also highlights the fact that many are concerned with more than just the 'process of imagining' or the imagined in all forms, some are concerned with the 'realisation of the imagined'. This crucial difference is recognised by Levitas, but she opts for the most inclusive approach. It is this commitment to realisation that wins my favour, and I want to look more closely at the consequences of this intuition.

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[12] Idem., p. 207
[13] Idem., p. 220
[14] Idem., pp. 221-222
[15] Idem., pp. 207-208

4. Desire & Hope: Descriptive & Prescriptive Utopianism

Before we discuss the commitment to realisation, the difference between the two approaches needs to be clarified. Levitas acutely demonstrates that the choice between a very broad definition and a commitment to realisation, hinges on the distinction between desire and hope. The former is no more than a want, a wish to have, whereas the latter incorporates the added condition that any given want must possess the potential to be realised. One could distinguish between a *passive* desire and an *active* desire, but it is the latter that we call hope. The strength of a definition based on desire is that it subverts any disagreement in the underlying values of the ideal society. It is a strictly non-evaluative approach and therefore purely *descriptive.* Thus, even though hope assumes nothing more than the condition of realisability, this alone renders utopia vulnerable to attack; for the potential realisation and desirability of any value is open to debate. A definition based on hope thus becomes a highly evaluative approach and is very much *prescriptive.*

Thus, at this point I want to introduce a distinction between *descriptive-* and *prescriptive-*utopianism: the former rejecting all evaluative and normative judgements as a means to categorise utopia, whilst the latter embraces the need for evaluative and normative judgements. Statements made in descriptive utopianism, as Levitas proposes, take the form: 'I have a desire *for* certain conditions that I deem favourable to manifest themselves in our world', whereas statements of prescriptive utopianism take the form: 'I have hope that certain conditions that I deem favourable *can* manifest themselves in our world'. Thus, proponents of the descriptive express no desire to change the world and are content in describing the various manifestation of desire itself. Proponents of the prescriptive possess a real desire to affect change and consequently argue in normative and evaluative terms.

5. A Prescriptive Conception of Utopia

In this final section, I want to reconsider some of what has been said and introduce my intentions for the rest of this thesis. Having examined several definitions of utopia categorised in terms of content, form and function, we can begin to surmise both the scope of utopian studies and the extent of divergence between different intentions and methods. Additionally, we have seen multiple elements that are relevant to most, if not all utopia's, and which are inseparable from a conception thereof. Finally, I could find little fault in Levitas' comments concerning a uniform definition of utopia. It seems that the most inclusive definition of utopia must be based on the principle of desire, as the principle of hope precludes those fantastic utopias that cannot be realised. Nevertheless, a distinction can be made between *descriptive-* and *prescriptive-*utopianism, which allows us to reinstate the principle of hope as fundamental to a certain conviction of utopianism.

There is a contrast between the study of utopia and the *quest* for utopia, the latter being above all a political question and, as Levitas herself points out: 'if utopia arises from desire, the transformation of reality and the realisation of utopia depend upon hope, upon not only wishful thinking but will-ful action'[16].

Thus, in exploring the concept of utopia, I want to retain the desire to affect the world and remain hopeful that change is possible. As such, I am bound to a prescriptive utopianism and face the many related problems. However, it is not my intention here to set a normative agenda for utopia, instead I wish to describe the format in which prescriptive utopianism has previously been conceived and offer an alternative conception of how utopia is involved in shaping the world.

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[16]   Idem., pp. 230-231

As a result of thinking these preliminary intuitions through, my view to utopia has changed. In place of the wonder inspired by the many different conceptions of ideal society, we find a need to question the efficacy of the proposed changes to our world. This affects many of the choices that we make in designing our utopia.

But before we pursue this line of thought further (in chapter 3), it is important to understand our conviction that we must change the world for the better; a conviction that seems central to utopia. This urge is born both of a deep dissatisfaction, the object of which is our current situation, and a belief that the world *can* change for the better. We *want* to venture beyond our current state into a better one. Any change for the better can then be characterised as a progression from the current inferior state to a transformed favourable one. Thus, the will to change and progress are inseparably linked. Moreover, with respect to society as a whole, betterment becomes more than economic or technological progress alone. Thus our object becomes *human* progress. With this, we can answer deeper questions relating to the possibility of change in our society and examine the notion of human progress as central to a prescriptive utopianism. We find that the desire to affect change in our world becomes active hope for social transformation, which becomes a prescriptive utopianism and embraces the possibility of human progress.

Thus, in the following chapter, *Human Progress*, I will examine the nature of human progress and place it central to our will to change the world. In this, I will introduce my first normative evaluation of prescriptive utopianism, proposing that a primitivist ideal is inadequate for constructive social change as it negates those developments in history that we have hitherto considered progressive, which furthermore provide the main empirical justification for possibility of progress. So I will ask: is human progress possible? If so, what does it encompass and is it central to prescriptive utopian thought? I will answer that human progress is possible on the basis of past success, submitting these as the justification for the existence of progress. Finally, I will argue that our desire to change the world for the better is in itself the source of our human progress.

Chapter 2

Human Progress
The desire for change and its embodiment in human progress

"A map of the world that does not include Utopia is not worth even glancing at, for it leaves out the one country at which Humanity is always landing. And when Humanity lands there, it looks out, and, seeing a better country, sets sail. Progress is the realisation of utopias."

– Oscar Wilde, The Soul of Man Under Socialism

1. Bœtica

François de Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon anonymously published the adventures of Télémaque in 1699. He described a utopia unrivalled in its simplicity and elegance: the kingdom of Bœtica. Yet it was not a kingdom for it had no king, and it was not a country for it had no borders. Nevertheless there were those who were considered the citizens of Bœtica; who lived long lives free from disease and hunger. The inhabitants were self-sufficient and cultivated the plentiful land which meant that there was no need for trade or commerce. They were a travelling people and had no need for permanent housing or to populate cities. Moreover, they were a peaceful people who gladly shared what little surplus they had, which meant there was never cause for war. And when confronted with the fact that the greatest nations enjoyed advanced architecture, ornate jewels of gold and silver, sweet perfumes, fine meats, riveting music and astonishing art, the inhabitants simply replied: 'These superfluities (…) effeminate, intoxicate, and torment those who possess them: and tempt those who possess them not, to acquire them by fraud and violence. Can that superfluity be good which tends only to make men evil?'[17]

This primitivist utopian ideal[18] is enticing in its transparency and grace. No grand unified theories are required, no complex political structure, no elaborate systems of justice, no disputed theories of equality, or freedom, or virtue, or aesthetics. The details of all these elements appear blissfully apparent in life as lived in Bœtica. Nature was as she presented herself, the father was head of the household and would punish in a manner he felt befitting (although this rarely occurred) and all citizens were free to move as they pleased. As for their occupation: 'they were either shepherds or husbandmen; for as they suffered no arts to be exercised among them, but such as tended immediately to answer the necessities of life, the number of artificers was consequently small'[19].

But what *of* the arts? What of the sciences? What of the architecture, jewellery, perfumes and meats? Are these not the very things by which we measure greatness? Would simply their abolition truly result in the peaceable society that men seek, and if so; can we not save the higher

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17 Fénelon, F. (1699) 'The Adventures of Telemachus', translated by Dr. Hawkesworth (1807), W. Suttaby & B. Crosby & Co., pp. 163-164, retrieved 9-10-2011 from: http://books.google.nl/booksid=qulOAAAAYAAJ&pg=PA166&lpg=PA166&dq=telemachus+boetica&source=bl&ots=EzlDIRQkXO&sig=90c78cOE9JuQdQ_iHpa_O6TrxlM&hl=nl&ei=xZqRTp6wAoiCOrvl9MsN&sa=X&oi=book_result&ct=result&resnum=2&ved=0CCAQ6AEwAQ#v=onepage&q=intoxicate&f=false
18 Schuurman, P. (2011) 'Fénelon on luxury, war and trade in the Telemachus', Elsevier
19 Fénelon, (1699), p. 162

virtues, those of the arts and sciences to trade for jewellery and perfume, which are all so ardently rejected as vice in Bœtica?

Torn between this paradise within reach and an unnerving intuition these questions become unavoidable. What is it that prevents us from taking these songs of utopia to heart and starting life anew with a nomadic existence in mind? It seems that we are not willing to sacrifice so many of man's greatest virtues in order to overcome most, if not all of his vices. We do not dare reduce our cultural traditions to a static bare minimum; to forgo the freedoms of experimentation in the arts, to cease the empirical quest for understanding in the sciences. Most of all, we do not seem willing to dismantle that which so many before us have built in the hopes of promoting the progress of mankind. The transference of knowledge from one generation to the next thus becomes the most inalienable of human activities.

These doubts demonstrate that we attach value to many domains of life that transcend our most basic needs. Bœtica serves to underline this intuition. Advancement in the satisfaction of both our basic needs and these transcendent values is what we may then call 'human progress'. If we see utopia Bœtica as ideal save for its lack of progress, and consequently subscribe to the ideal that there is more to life than satisfying our basic needs, we can conclude that a fruitful conception of utopia must involve some commitment to human progress[20], or in effect a commitment to those values other than our basic needs.

A consequence of this decision is that the endeavour toward a better world becomes almost exponentially more complex. Satisfying our basic needs is in many ways limited. Satisfying those transcendent values is arguably unlimited. In this, we can see that a prescriptive utopia is again tied to the idea of human progress, as it intends to support and justify the values that it sees as progressive, whatever they may be.

However, the assumption that human progress, as defined above, is a necessary part of utopia is just as much a normative decision as the choice in Bœtica to reject it. This illustrates again the idea that in the conception of utopia we are free to choose those values that define *our* utopia, as long as these values rest on solid arguments. Furthermore, any steps that are undertaken toward this chosen ideal, whatever it may be, are necessarily considered progressive; including, for instance, the dismantling of all previous efforts to advance mankind if and when one elevates Bœtica to one's chosen utopia. There is then a significant difference between the abstract concept 'progress' delineating those steps taken toward our chosen ideals, and 'human progress' which encompasses our basic needs and those values that transcend it (including for example the arts and the sciences). Note that the colloquial connotations of human progress are emphasised here to illustrate the point, choosing the primitivist ideal would negate those colloquial connotations.

Furthermore, as Bœtica is set to ideally satisfy only the most basic needs of life, it reaches a development ceiling. Having perfectly engineered the satisfaction of these needs, it remains in a static state for fear of throwing the societal balance into disharmony. But, the ideal of utopia must envision some value that guarantees it not fall into stasis; for its own health utopia must be perpetually in flux. This often heard warning comes from the idea that stasis breeds discontent. This idea is best illustrated by the well-known dystopia Nineteen Eighty-Four[21], where development in the arts for instances is strictly forbidden. One will see that often there is complete freedom in these aspects of life that are said to transcend the basic needs in utopia. Progress and utopia then are inseparably linked. (Indeed progress is the realisation of utopia as expressed by Wilde is his famous quote.)

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[20] This conclusion does not preclude Bœtica from being a Utopia, one may still subscribe to its ideals and thus reject human progress.
[21] Orwell, G (1949) 'Nineteen Eighty-Four', Secker & Warburg, London

Thus in this attempt to conceptualise utopian thinking it now becomes necessary to define more narrowly human progress, and to defend the integrity of the choice to include it into a concept of utopia based on the intuition to reject Bœtica.

2. The Doctrine of Human Progress

To start, the idea of human progress is not solely concerned with the rather short-term question: are we now as a society improving on the conditions that were left us? This because we are concerned with utopia, in which case the question takes on an exponential temporality and is concerned with the overall trend of development of mankind. We are looking for a *doctrine* of progress, like those epitomized by the optimism of 18th-century Europe[22]. In this, we want to establish a claim about human well-being that is compatible with a doctrine of progress. Additionally, some causal story must be provided with reference to laws of historical development. Finally, methods or reasons are required in support of the aforementioned account.

Some conception of human well-being lies at the heart of both the doctrine of human progress and utopia. Often this involves the equation of some specific value with human well-being. In the past, such values as freedom, utility and of course happiness have been advanced as candidates. Naturally, any such theory is not restricted to value monism, attaining multiple values can also constitute its end. However, the choice of values is highly challenging and many theorists of human progress leave human well-being ill-defined. As a result, often some 'conception of improvement for a circumscribed domain of life'[23] is presented. Again, the relationship between utopia and human progress presents itself as utopia is arguably the *ultimate* 'improvement for a circumscribed domain of life'. Nevertheless, even when a choice is made, a causal story is required to highlight how we are moving toward the achievement of these values.

The causal story often involves the notion of a universal history, meaning all of mankind becomes the subject of the historical narrative. In this causal story are set laws of human progress. As for the content of these laws, there are many competing conceptions. Kant proposes that mankind is indeed progressing and that the 'tension within human nature itself is the source of change'[24]. Marx proposes that growth in the means of production defines progress, whilst Hegel and Comte view the development of ideas throughout history as the most fundamental catalyst of progress. This final view is supported by a plethora of historical evidence. Take only the great thinkers Copernicus (1473-1543), Galileo (1564-1642) and Kepler (1571-1630) who each built on the advances of their predecessors and thus provided the foundation for the cornerstone of modern physics as proposed by Isaac Newton (1642-1727); their work no doubt being of paramount importance to the development of mankind.

As for the methodology, writers of theory on progress may use both empirical and *a priori* reasoning. The transfer of knowledge between generations can be argued along empirical lines, whilst reference to many aspects of human existence, including some conception of the meaning of life, can be introduced as a priori evidence in support of a doctrine of progress.

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[22] Meek Lange, M. (2011), 'Progress', Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy, retrieved 8 October 2011 from http://plato.stanford.edo/entries/progress
[23] Ibid.,
[24] Ibid.,

3. Utopia & Alternatives to the Doctrine of Human Progress

Naturally, proponents of a doctrine of progress are optimistic about mankind's progression. I wish to show that such an optimistic view is of paramount importance to the conception of utopia; for without the belief that mankind has been, is and will be progressing, I fear that there is little need for any conception of utopia. To defend this view I wish to present and reject alternatives to the doctrine of progress by arguing that they preclude the need for utopia, and thus are undesirable, as utopia is the image of a better world without which there can be no substantive nor deliberate improvement. To start, I consider the view that mankind is not progressing but digressing.

This idea can be defended in different ways. Our accumulation of goods can be seen as progress, whilst simultaneously it is evidence of a society that is out of balance with nature and does not oversee the consequences of its insatiable consumptive appetite. Similarly, although there may be intellectual development, one may ask if this also brings about moral development[25]. Seen in this way, our current situation can certainly be argued to be worsening, becoming ever more dire. Moreover, pessimism concerning our ability to recover from this digression can results in the view to an unwavering and irreconcilable fall from grace.

However, a belief in the unavoidable and unceasing decline of our species leaves no room for hope, even though we find that hope and utopianism continue to give our lives meaning and direction. It leaves room only for nihilist and anarchist conceptions of mankind which can in no way further its development. The conviction that the fate of mankind is sealed, results in the loss of any real motivation to better our common situation. All that remains is the temporary struggle for personal betterment, a return to the Hobbesian natural condition of man[26], a negation of the social contract and a loss of any conception of society or the need thereof beyond one for personal gain. Therefore, it is simply the hope that mankind can progress that must in itself and of itself be sufficient argument to reject a doctrine of human decline[27]. Thus, my argument against the idea that we should hold a negative doctrine of progress, or a doctrine of digress if you will, is that it is incompatible with the principle of hope and by extension incompatible with utopianism, which may not conclusively prove its error, but at the very least shows it to be undesirable. But far from this extreme view there are other, more tempered, alternatives to the doctrine of human progress.

One such alternative to the traditional understanding of progress, is to view our universal history not as linear, but as cyclical. This view was held by Plato and Aristotle[28]. They believed that progress was possible and allowed for the spontaneous occurrence of development, but collapse and decline were immanent. This view is not committed to the notion that there is either absolute progress or decline.

Intuitively, this theory can be represented diagrammatically in a circle. However, when plotted over an axis of time this circular representation takes on an undulating sinusoid form. This demonstrates the Platonian notion of the rise and fall of civilizations more accurately. Of course, the peaks and troughs of civilization may vary in height as one society reaches greater advancement than its precedents or its successors, but they necessarily oscillate conform the blue line (representing average progress over time) in order to represent the circular nature of the theory.

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[25] Wallace, A.R. (1892) 'Human Progress: Past and Future', retrieved 18-2-2012 from
      http://people.wku.edu/charles.smith/wallace/S445.htm
[26] Hobbes, T. (1651) 'Leviathan'
[27] One could protest: 'mankind has indeed fallen irrevocably from grace, but my actions on earth will secure my place in the kingdom of heaven'. This is the idea of personal salvation, yet this story of some single man has no bearing on the story of mankind, for with a view to the development of mankind one man's actions remain of no earthly nor universal consequence if mankind is irreconcilably doomed.
[28] Wallace, (1892)

1A
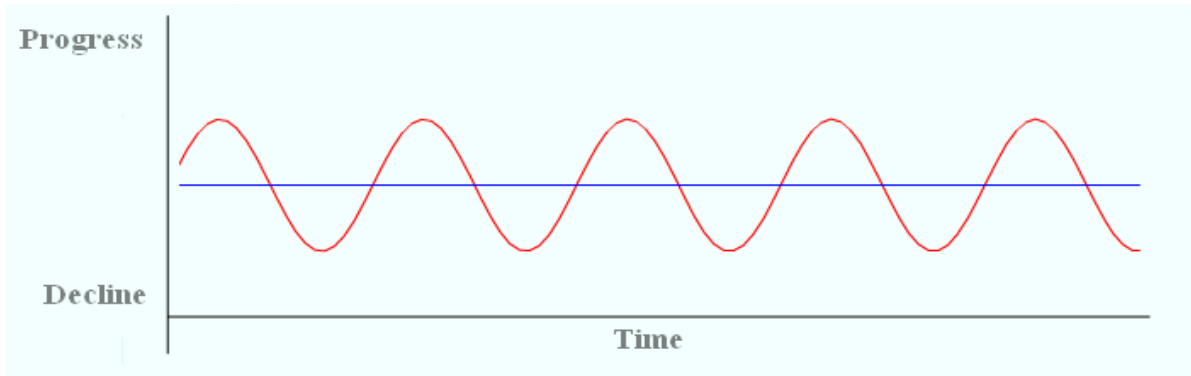
What this illustrates is that a circular view of history is static over time. Furthermore, even though the height of progress and the depth of descent may vary (as has been said), there can be no transference of knowledge from one oscillation to the other, at least not to the effect that this permanently advances the subsequent cycles. Significantly, this theory then precludes accumulation and transference of knowledge over time. Of course, for Plato and Aristotle the transference of knowledge through generations was exceedingly difficult. Now, however, it seems unlikely that our society will crumble to the extent that all the accumulated knowledge of our world will be lost. There is much evidence to support the accumulation of knowledge over time; one need only examine the development of language to glimpse the fundamental propensity of mankind to use, historicise and distribute knowledge[29]. Moreover, the idea that one generation's progress is facilitated by the efforts of its predecessors is fundamental to the doctrine of progress. Thus, when we factor in the cumulative transference of knowledge over time with an optimistic view of what mankind will achieve with this knowledge, i.e., that increased knowledge facilitates progress, our graphical illustration changes as follows:

1B
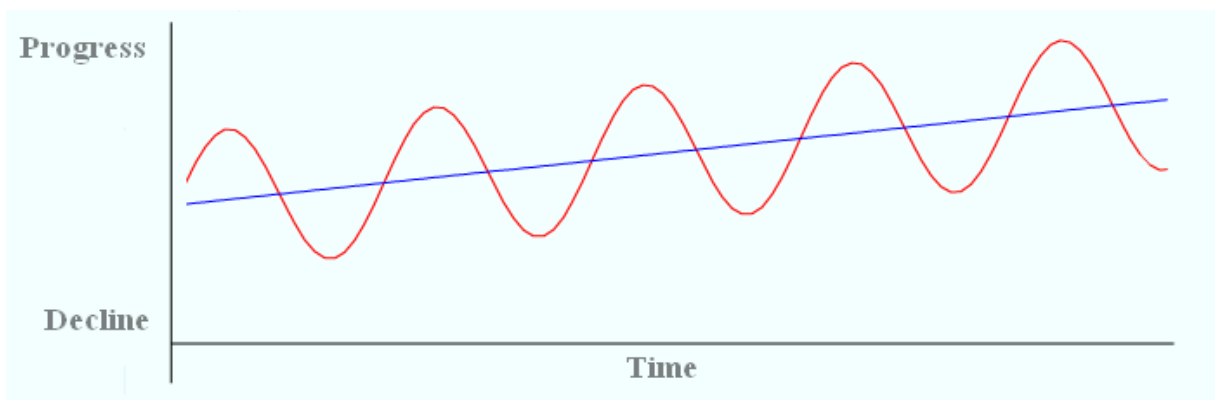
This shows that a doctrine of progress within a narrative of universal history need not differ from the Platonian circular view except in the incorporation of the belief that transference of knowledge over time is possible. This alone can already result in an upward trend of human progress as the diagram illustrates.

[29] See: Doren, C. v. (1992) 'A History of Knowledge: Past, Present and Future', Random House Publishing Group, and Russel, B. (1946) 'A History of Western Philosophy, Unwin Brothers Limited, Woking; see also 'Planet Word', by Steven Fry, BBC 2011

Note that the blue line of progress in 1A is a representation of utopia Bœtica, which sees no variation at all over time, whilst the Platonian view allows movement on the axis of progression and decline, but remains static on average. The representation of the doctrine of progress is then the most dynamic theory, allowing variation both in progress and on average over time. What this expresses is the fact that with the doctrine of progress, fluctuations in progress or decline and the overall trend can be consolidated to express optimism concerning the past and the future of mankind; optimism founded on the belief that man has the means to alter his situation and can indeed progress.

A final view maintains that we simply do not know if mankind is progressing or digressing. This position can be criticised from a similar approach as above. Simply stating that we cannot know either way renders any further thought on the subject baseless. This is of course a plausible position, however; it is in light of the sceptical argument that no knowledge is possible, that one may concede to call a belief in the doctrine of progress a necessary illusion. But against any other line of reasoning that has stepped beyond this sceptical threshold, I would vehemently defend the merits of the arguments supporting the doctrine of human progress, as in my view no alternative position is based on any more evidence than this one or indeed any sounder reasoning. Moreover, it is hope that prevents us from releasing ourselves from this burden of attaching meaning to our existence, even when facing seemingly dire circumstances. It is the criticism of our current situation that should inspire action, and indeed inspires utopia, but hope must remain lest we succumb to accept a doctrine of decline.

4. Necessity of a Doctrine of Progress

Thus, to engage in social utopian dreaming is either to believe in the possibility of a better society or to mock our destitute and impoverished existence. It is the resolution of hope that necessarily entails the former. The utopia of Bœtica has shown us that a static society leaves us wanting. Furthermore, doctrines of digression or circular views of history only entail a sense of futility. And even though one remains conceptually free to choose his or her criteria for utopia, any such choice is normative by definition. We are lost without hope; we are lost without progress. These two interconnected notions offer defence against the real possibility that mankind's struggles carry no significance. Thus, it is the belief that our efforts change things for the better that lay the foundations of the conception of human progress. We must *know* that the (hi)story of mankind is defined by a progressive trend, for without which no chapter of our time would be of any consequence. This belief lies at the heart of utopian dreaming, and embodies the driving force behind a prescriptive utopia. Again, without the knowledge that the trials and tribulations of men past are not in vain, any incentive for advance and betterment would be fruitless and futile. As Fichte writes in his Destiny of Man:

'I simply cannot imagine the present situation of mankind as being the one in which it will now remain, simply cannot imagine it being its whole and final destiny. Everything would then be a dream and an illusion; and it would not be worth the trouble of having lived and having joined in this constantly recurring, fruitless and meaningless game. Only in so far as I can regard this state as the means to a better one, as the crossing-point to a higher and more perfect one, does it acquire any value for me; I am able to bear it not for its own sake, but for the sake of the better life for which it prepares the way.'

Chapter 3

Prescriptive Utopianism

In general and my own conception

Our belief in the possibility of human progress lies at the heart of our belief that we can change the world. In rejecting a primitivst utopia for its lack of faith in the optimistic conception of human progress, and thus with the hope that past efforts are not misguided nor in vain, we come to better understand the desire to change the world and the deep seeded hope that it entails. This is the first tentative step toward a conception of prescriptive utopia. With the idea that any current progress is built on the advancements made in the past, rejecting fatalism with respect to human progress and the primitivist account, my thoughts on prescriptive utopia become normative and evaluative judgements.

With this, prescriptive utopianism largely conforms to what Barbara Goodwin refers to as 'reconstructive political theory' in her work *The Politics of Utopia*. She describes three conditions that must be met by such theories: these are 'first, the notion that society is an artefact subject to change by human agency; secondly, that progress is possible; and thirdly, an absence of fatalism'[30]. Goodwin also points out that without these qualities, a theory is devoid of optimism[31]. I have said that progress is not only possible, but desirable, and this belief precludes fatalism. Implicit in my contention is the idea that this progress occurs at the hands of humanity itself. Therefore I contend that these conditions are indeed necessary for prescriptive utopianism, which in itself can be characterised as a (re)constructive political theory, even though politics need not necessarily play a part.

On this basis I can now provide a more detailed account of my understanding of a productive prescriptive utopianism, whilst noting where and when my evaluations are normative with respect to prescriptive utopianism (meaning not necessary conditions of prescriptive utopianism itself, but necessary in my opinion). I employ this strategy for two reasons: firstly, as this thesis is an exercise in the conceptualisation of utopia, and I have already limited the scope to prescriptive utopianism, I wish to provide some account of this subdivision. Secondly, as I do not feel that my characterisation is particularly controversial, it would be repetitive to provide an extensive account of both prescriptive utopianism as a subset, and my own views within the relatively wide array of possibilities that can be considered prescriptive. Often my opinions concerning certain elements may be taken for granted, but I do wish to point out that these are not *necessary* nor sufficient conditions for prescriptive utopianism, but my opinion.

Thus, in what follows I will illustrate how the decision to approach utopianism with the intent to alter our world has far reaching consequences for both the definition of what is utopian and its further use. From this decision follows a prescriptive approach which will determine function, suggest a solution to the collective problem, require politics, be based on hope as opposed to desire, be possible and require a particular conception in terms of space and time, amongst others. I will sketch the particulars of the different elements and demonstrate that a complete picture of a prescriptive utopia necessarily requires a favourable opinion of human progress.

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[30]   Goodwin (2001), p. 13, cited from Levitas (2011), pp. 223-224
[31]   Ibid.,

1. Descriptive / Prescriptive

To start, I will briefly return to the distinction between descriptive and prescriptive utopianism. One may favour both the descriptive or prescriptive approach for different reasons. As has been said, a most inclusive conception of utopianism may be desired to dismiss the debate on what should be labelled utopian. It is undoubtedly of importance to collate all products of human desire, and to discuss similarities or relevant differences. The function of such an endeavour is to catalogue everything that should be considered when engaging in utopian thought or practice, or any other endeavour that requires a history of human desire. It is necessarily important to have a complete history, to the extent that this is possible, prior to setting out on a utopian project for no one will doubt the benefits of learning from our past.

This having been said, a prescriptive theory of utopia is founded on an entirely different motivation. The intent here is to alter the world in which we live, or at the very least provide the tools to do so via a well-informed opinion. This makes it a normative approach; professing what a good society is and/or how we can best reach it. This active stance denies value relativity; where descriptive utopianism regards no one value as preferred, prescriptive utopianism argues why one value *should* be preferred to another. In prescriptive utopianism we ultimately want to facilitate the transition from our world to utopia. This requires some conception of utopia. This conception, in turn, conforms to certain criteria, which we will discuss below. The choices made about utopia within these criteria reveal much about the intentions of its author. This having been said, a complete history remains crucial to the prescriptive project, as many normative decisions must be justified with reference to the past.

Neither approach to utopianism is better than the other but: one may be preferred because it attains certain goals. A prime example is the inspiration for this thesis, the notion that if one wants to affect change in the world, one needs some conception of what a better world looks like. With this, utopia must facilitate transition toward an ideal. If this is one's goal then a prescriptive utopianism is required. With this foundation of prescriptive utopianism we can begin to assess the consequences on the conception of utopia in terms of the elements on the basis of which utopias are traditionally divided.

2. Basic Conception of Prescriptive Utopia

2.1 Primary Function

Engaging in utopianism with intent to effect change immediately calls to light the question of function. Simply put: utopia must facilitate change (an idea that we have already come across with Bauman[32] and Mannheim[33]). In this, a prescriptive utopia primarily has a function, and all utopias under prescriptive utopianism should initially be classified as such. This then precludes the land of Cockaygne and other desirable yet fantastic societies such as the Garden of Eden[34] or Atlantis.

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[32] Bauman (1976)
[33] Mannheim, K. (1936) 'Ideology and Utopia', Routledge,
[34] Goodwin (2001), p. 13

However, the category of function as proposed by Levitas is not synonymous with a prescriptive utopianism, nor does any definition based on function belong solely to prescriptive utopianism, as there can be descriptive definitions based on function[35]. However, many of the theories that define utopia in terms of function tend to be prescriptive. This includes for example the theories of Ernst Bloch, which profess a Marxist utopia, but also the literary work of B.F. Skinner and his Walden Two[36], which is clearly an endorsement of his own theories on behavioural modification written to effect change. Moreover, recognising this primary function of utopia serves to underline its connectedness with the real world. It hardens the bond between our reality and the endeavour to effect real change. It pushes the boundaries of the mere theoretical and places the normative as central: what is the real change proposed by utopia? Are the arguments for this change sound?

The reason that I refer to a primary (or "proper") function here, is that I believe utopia to have a number of functions that result in different ways of writing about utopia. For instance, the literary utopia could serve to inspire action simply by providing political commentary; many utopias are credited with this function, not least More's own work. But, a utopia can also be described to defend certain theoretical principles, such as in Skinner's Walden Two. Alternatively, utopian theory can provide an account of the need for utopianism in general, such as in Ernst Bloch, or even be a discussion of the possibility of implementing certain values, a function which is arguably fulfilled by Rawls' *Theory of Justice*[37]. However, as there are many different further functions (and thus forms), I will not discuss these here but complete the preliminary conceptual basis before returning to them in chapters 4 and 5. Nevertheless, we can see that these works all have in common the *intent* to affect change which is crucial to prescriptive utopianism.

2.2 Possible World

The requirement of inspiring change in the *real* world becomes the foremost reason for requiring that utopia be a possible world. By definition prescriptive utopianism wants to transform the world in which we live. The method may vary, and so the theory or the literary forms may differ. However, it seems hard to imagine that a fantasy world which defies the laws of man and nature is the best vessel to transform our world. Although this may be the case, I do contend that this is not a necessary requirement. Nevertheless, it seems unlikely that Cockaygne is our best guide to a better world.

Thus, in light of the prescriptive nature of my preferred approach, an allegorical tale of the best possible society seems lacking in terms of its ability to fulfil the function as specified in prescriptive utopianism. The effort to move civilization to an ideal requires us to take into account the complexities of both nature and human nature. This requires a thorough, broad and even scholarly approach. All elements must be presented and debated to come to a consensus; a process strikingly similar to the scientific approach[38]. This seems the best available method to arrive at a common truth.

Again, one could of course contend that liberties in the natural requirements can be taken whilst still producing a prescriptive utopia. Thus, being a possible world is not a strict requirement of prescriptive utopianism, but it is a requirement that I subscribe to. Ideally, we seek a complete picture of how our society can harmoniously function and solve the collective problems that are faced by all of mankind to the best of our abilities.

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[35]   See Levitas (2011)
[36]   Skinner, B.F. (1976) 'Walden Two', Macmillan
[37]   Rawls, J. (1971) 'A Theory of Justice', Belknap Press, Harvard University
[38]   For a discussion on Utopia and Science see Goodwin (2011)

2.3 The Collective Problem

This leads us then to consider the collective problem. Besides the idea that a useful theory must be conceived within the constraints of what is physically possible, we need ask if it should consider the whole of humanity or only a part of it.

Historically, utopias have often proven to be exclusive societies. More's *Utopia* has an extensive foreign policy that ranged from negotiations of trade to war, thus written as an exemplary state and not as an inclusive model. Similarly, Huxley's *Brave New World*[39] had no immediate contact with the outside world. Yet both societies welcomed converts. In principle, their ideas were applicable to and for any persons wanting to live in utopia. Thus, in this sense, their subject was humanity in its entirety and not merely some portion. Modern day examples of unacceptable constructions would include the exploitation of women, or minorities, or even animals, for the benefit of the chosen group.

It seems then that we are asking for a conception of the ideal society for all mankind. In this respect, we are engaging in a Rawlsian exercise, employing 'the veil of ignorance', and theoretically removing ourselves and our opinions from the equation. In this exercise, the designer of utopia should be anonymous in every respect, save for the fact that he is human. Thus we may ask: what problems do we, as humans, face together? Or, to put it more precisely, in the guise of a prescriptive utopianism: what problems must we, as humans, solve together?

The intention of this subsection is to note that prescriptive utopianism should be concerned with society as a whole and not with particular groups. This entails the collective problem, with collective solutions, open and available to all.

Here it becomes clear that I wish to endorse an egalitarian conception of utopia. In principle one may write a prescriptive utopia that is highly exclusive and tyrannical. Within the broad discussion of political writing and utopia, the position of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*[40] is sometimes named to highlight the consequences of such decisions. Strictly said, his fascist program is a form of prescriptive utopia. But at this juncture, it must be repeated that I am doing more than merely describing prescriptive utopianism. I assume that a prescriptive utopia aims at improving the position of all mankind, and not some portion. This is an egalitarian point of view, and not particularly controversial.

2.4 Space

One consequence of taking all of mankind as the subjects of utopia is the need to view all space in which humans live as the space in which it is to be manifested. As of yet, this encompasses only the Earth, but must pertain to all climates and environments in it. A utopia based on another planet, or under water, does not speak to the immediate and collective problems that our society faces at present. I can see no advantage in making a decision not to base a prescriptive utopia on Earth, as removal from the natural surroundings, and the surroundings that are the object of our interest, would make the utopia allegorical at best. Thus, both the collective problems that we face, and the environment in which we face them, determine the space in which utopia should be envisioned. All this, in turn, supports the notion that a possible world is required.

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[39] Huxley, A. (1932) 'A Brave New World', HarperCollins Publishers
[40] Hitler, A. (1925) 'Mein Kampf', Eher Verlag

2.5 Time

Similarly, these considerations affect the aspect of time in utopia. For prescriptive utopianism, it seems most obvious to envision utopia as being in the future. If one is going to change the world according to some ideal, this ideal will necessarily come into fruition over time. The idea is that utopia provides a blueprint, in a sense, of what we must work toward.

One advantage of this is that current social, political, economic and technological changes can be taken into account. Often, such 'trends' will not change in the foreseeable future, and must be mentioned even if only for the sake of explicating the transition from our current state to utopia. Projecting advances in all these aspects into the future can provide a theoretical stepping stone for success. For instance, great increases in the standard of living were predicted with the industrial revolution and advancement was indeed achieved. In this respect, our predictive capacity can help prepare us for the forthcoming time of progress or hardship. In this sense, even the dimension of time sees to bolster realisability.

Of course a future oriented utopia is not the only possibility. If one were to prefer Fénelon's *Bœtica*, society would have to return to this primitivist state. Given that Bœtica is said to have existed half a century ago, the utopian ideal would be oriented toward the past, or backward looking.

Again, I would contend that such a conservative approach is lacking in that it blames all evils in society on the failure to sufficiently appreciate the simplicity of early life, and furthermore negates the advances made. In my opinion, a constructive utopia can only be placed in the future, if only to inspire the thought that we are heading toward it rather than that we have veered off course and are travelling further and further away from the ideal. A utopia set in the future is the promise of better world As has been said: to inspire change, there is a need for hope that things can progress and not just the desire to return to a past state.

3. Utopia to Change the World

We now have a picture of prescriptive utopianism, its necessary and its likely requirements. Here I want to summarise what a utopianism holds that is best suited to affect social and political transformation of our society. To start, we know of course that it must be a prescriptive utopia; so much is clear, and has been the fundamental assumption of this third chapter. Additionally, a new utopia must work within the constraints of human nature and the laws of nature. Although some liberties may be permitted, it seems unlikely that a complete fantasy is the most effective means to realising an ideal society. Therefore, we seek a conception of a possible world.

Furthermore, in designing this ideal society, we must be concerned with the collective problem. It is not sufficient to realise an ideal that holds only for a select group. The problems for which solutions are sought are necessarily shared problems that require shared solutions. This measure, in turn, requires an egalitarian outlook on utopia. Additionally, owing to the collective problem and the condition of real possibility, utopia concerns our world, Earth, and all (human) beings that inhabit it. The collective problem originates from the shared conditions of Earth and can only be specified in terms of the varying conditions on Earth.

Finally, a proper picture of utopia is situated in the future. This not only serves to highlight the real possibility of change, but also the need for progress. The future continues to be the best vestibule for inspiring hope. The past only conjures emotions of discontent in that man has failed to see the error of their ways and must now work to correct its departure from the ideal.

This conception of utopia is by no means controversial, or at least is not meant to be. It is relatively easy to understand why such a conception may hold and why I wish to hold it. Some aspects even seem necessary, such as its function and possibility. Other factors are merely advantageous given the particular purpose; this includes, for instance, the selection of a future-oriented temporality over a utopia situated in the past.

With this still preliminary account of what a utopia geared at transforming our world must look like, we can advance beyond its skeletal conception and explore how it can inspire change. To this end, we must re-establish the importance of utopia, and its unrivalled connectedness to social transformation. We must look again at why *hope* is the founding principle of prescriptive utopianism and what this means for its realisation. Such an account has been given by Ernst Bloch in his *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*. Thus, in the following chapter, I will examine his philosophy of utopia, with the aim to identify those elements of hope that make removal of utopia from our social theory unthinkable.

Chapter 4

Ernst Bloch & The Principle of Hope
Dreams, the Not-Yet, Abstract & Concrete Utopia, Docta Spes, Novum

Having defined prescriptive utopianism and explored my own view on what a prescriptive utopia encompasses, I want to return to the fundamental desires that inspire utopia. We have already seen its relation to human progress and its different forms and functions, now I want to look more closely at the need for utopia in social transformation. To this end, I will examine the work of Ernst Bloch, whose philosophy of utopia is most fundamentally geared toward such transformation. The work of Bloch will provide key concepts to a further understanding of utopia, and to situating prescriptive utopia in a broader context, which I will attempt in my final chapter. In this chapter, I will first provide a brief history of the life of Ernst Bloch, followed by an examination of his philosophy. Subsequently, I will examine how his work relates to the elements of prescriptive utopianism described in the previous chapter. Additionally, I will look at several structural criticisms of his work and conclude with a comparison of Bloch's philosophy and my own views on prescriptive utopia.

1. The Philosophy of Ernst Bloch

Ernst Bloch (1885-1977) was born in Ludwigshafen, Germany to a Jewish working class family[41]. He graduated with a degree in philosophy and embarked on a lifelong career in the discipline, spanning two world wars, the rise and fall of fascism, Stalinism, various revolutions, the Cold War, the Korean and Vietnam wars. Throughout this period, and until his death, he was an outspoken proponent of Marxism and actively supported efforts to establish communism as the dominant political order. Besides his work on Marxism, he produced many writings on utopia: his first work devoted to the subject being *Geist der Utopie* (1918), the climax his *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* (1938-1947).

Far from remaining unscathed by the political turmoil of his time, with the rise of the Nazi party in Germany, Bloch was forced to flee to Switzerland, then to Austria, France and Czechoslovakia. Throughout this time, he wrote prolifically against the war and critiqued both the Communists and Social Democrats 'for failing the proletariat, peasants and middle class'[42]. In 1938, Bloch decided to immigrate to the United States, where, ironically, his unorthodox ideas placed him in less danger than in the Soviet Union. Having written the bulk of his three-volume work on Hope there, in 1949, he accepted an offer to head the department of Philosophy in Leibniz. Although he was permitted to publish his magnum opus, he soon became disenchanted with the stringent policies of the East German government and, being no stranger to rousing controversy, was eventually relieved of his responsibilities at the university and effectively silenced from the public realm.[43] Soon began the construction of the Berlin Wall, and in 1961, whilst on holiday in West Germany, he decided to stay. There he remained, working at the University of Tübingen until his death.

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[41] Roberts, R. (1987) 'Review Article An Introductory Reading of Ernst Bloch's The Principle of Hope', retrieved 8-12-2011 from: http://litthe.oxfordjournals.org/

[42] Zipes, J. (1997) 'Traces of Hope: The Non-Synchronicity of Ernst Bloch', in: Daniel, J. & Moylan, T. (ed) 'Not Yet: Reconsidering Ernst Bloch', Verso, p. 2

[43] Idem., pp. 1-2

This very short history of his life clearly demonstrates that Ernst Bloch was a controversial figure. His life-choices remain a mirror of his heroes: Moses, Jesus Christ, Thomas Müntzer and Karl Marx, amongst others[44]. Although I will not further explicate the reception of his work, I hope to have made clear that his ideas were unorthodox, even radical, and, in the spirit of his own beliefs and commitments, above all intended to be revolutionary. The undeniable quality of his work is his unwavering and militant optimism, in a time when there was certainly no immediate cause thereof, but for this selfsame reason a dire need. Given this background, we can begin to understand what motivated Bloch's insistence of the need for utopia. As he himself wrote, "this is not a time to be without wishes"[45]. And it is with an understanding of these wishes, these dreams of a better world born of the fact that we 'never tire of wanting things to improve'[46], that we can begin to understand Bloch's endeavour to rehabilitate the place of utopia.

1.1 Dreams & Wish-Fulfilment

This last quote is part of the opening sentence to Bloch's discussion of dreams. He explains how the deprived always have dreams of a better future and that it is they who dream that these may be fulfilled. But here two different meanings of the word 'dream' are conflated. One the one hand, a 'dream' implies visions of an improved future, on the other to 'dream' is a psychological state. The conflation of the metaphorical sense of a dream with the analytic is employed by Bloch as a mode to segue from the social dimension of utopian dreaming, to the psychological reality that is the phenomenon of dreaming. But far from being merely a literary device, it emphasises the fundamental requirement of the dream element for the justification of Bloch's larger project. Thus, in *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, Bloch's discussion of dreams functions as the stepping stone to move from his interpretation of the human condition to his main project of reviving utopia.

In order to complete this move, he analyses both night- and daydreams. It may come as no surprise that in this analysis, he repeatedly refers to the work of Sigmund Freud. Although he is often critical of Freud (and even more so of Carl Gustav Jung) he finds inspiration in the work of his contemporary. He writes: 'since Freud, it is generally agreed (and this will be his lasting contribution) that dreams are not merely means of protecting sleep, or a world of poppies, but – as regards both their motor and their content – wish-fulfillment too'[47]. But he soon departs from the Freudian interpretation of dreams as Freud concentrates almost exclusively on night-dreams. Bloch wants to highlight the special importance of daydreams in relation to these nocturnal dreams[48]. Although he agrees with Freud that night-dreams are projections of hallucinated gratification that do not suffer interference from the ego[49], to Bloch, daydreams are the representations of anticipatory, world-improving potential. He ascribes four characteristics to the day-dream: firstly, the vision is aided by a 'clear road', not hampered by particular circumstances and likewise does not take us anywhere we do not want to go. Secondly, the ego remains strong in the daydream and functions to keep its images within acceptable bounds, although fleeting, that do not offend our conscious sensibilities. Thirdly, the daydream is world-improving: this calls into being an extrovert ego, capable of including others into thought processes, as opposed to the introvert egoism of the night-dream. The fourth and final characteristic is called 'journey to the end'; this means that a wish is carried out to fulfilment in the daydream.

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[44] Idem., p. 1
[45] Bloch (1986) 'The Principle of Hope', Volumes I-III, translated by Plaice, N. & Plaice, S. & Knight, P., Basil Blackwell Ltd., p. 77
[46] Ibid.,
[47] Idem., p. 78
[48] Weissenborn, U. (1998) '"Just Making Pictures": Hollywood Writers, the Frankfurt School, and Film Theory', Gunter Narr Verlag
[49] Bloch (1986), p. 78

As can be seen, the daydream is an overtly positive endeavour, sharing both the characteristic of the wish-fulfilment of the dream and the anticipatory potential of conscious wishing. For this reason, Bloch credits daydreams with being 'a tireless incentive towards the actual attainment of what it visualizes'[50]. Again, one can clearly see why these daydreams are of such importance to Bloch. Their essence of possibility, wish-fulfilment, world-improvement and above all their anticipatory nature, lead Bloch to consider the value of the *anticipatory* to utopia. He makes this the basis for his thesis of the 'Not-Yet'.

1.2 Not-Yet-Conscious & Not-Yet-Become

Thus, beyond the anticipatory character of daydreams themselves, Bloch discusses the value of the anticipatory to utopia. He develops the anticipatory in relation to expectant emotions and expectant ideas. On these he writes:

'Both future oriented intentions (…) accordingly extend into a Not-Yet-Conscious, that is, into a class of consciousness which is itself to be designed not as filled, but as anticipatory. The waking dreams advance, provided they contain real future, collectively in the Not-Yet-Conscious, into the unbecome-unfilled or utopian field'[51].

As introduction to his discussion of the Not-Yet, this quote highlights many important aspects of Bloch's conception of utopia. Not least the future-oriented, possible-world characteristics, but especially the anticipatory positive that envelops the Not-Yet, both '-Conscious' and '-Become'.

The idea of the Not-Yet-Conscious is again developed via a critique of Freud. In this respect, Bloch disagrees with Freud's overtly negative understanding of the unconscious. To Freud, only repressed material that is no longer conscious is ascribed to the unconscious. Bloch, however, wishes to emphasise the countervailing creative potential of the unconscious, which for him constitutes the edge of a realm of possibility, dormant in the mind, and necessarily *near-by* conscious but not-yet. Thus, the unconscious is also the pre-conscious, and a source of the utopian impulse which Bloch believes is fundamental to being human[52].

This Not-Yet-Conscious, then, is all that which lies dormant in the mind of man, but which embodies the potential for change, revolution and progress. These ideas are inspired by our circumstances, be they social or physical, so in this sense they are at least partially determined by, and thus vary throughout, our history. Moreover, the extent of this pre-conscious material or potential is strongest in youth, when no choice has yet been made, no possibilities negated. Thought is still free, anticipatory and full of potential, which leads Bloch to write: 'All times of change are thus filled with Not-Yet-Conscious, even overfilled'[53].

This plethora of ideas and new concepts that wait to be given voice must remain subjective or psychological in its ontology. Only its correlate, the Not-Yet-Become can be transformed into a physical change in reality. These two concepts differ only in this ontological category, but which marks a significant difference. One relates to the realm of ideas, the other to our physical reality. Nevertheless, the Not-Yet-Become is essential to Bloch's analysis of the potential that pervades the world and the anticipatory nature of this immature possibility. It emphasizes the sense in which the material world is not determined, but open to an infinite number of possibilities, although these possibilities are limited to the real as has previously been said. This indeterminacy implies a constant process in the world and where the field of ideas is ploughed continuously to reveal new seeds of potential in the Not-Yet-Conscious and the Not-Yet-Become. Thus, the two categories are one, and can be referred to as the Not-Yet, or anticipatory.

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[50] Idem., p. 88
[51] Bloch (1986) P. 113
[52] Levitas (2011), p. 101
[53] Bloch (1986), p. 118

With this transition from dream to anticipation and potential in mind, Bloch is able to define utopia as 'anticipatory consciousness'[54]. I hope to have made clear the reasons for this characterisation and to have conveyed the fleeting nature of the ideas involved in the endeavour of utopia as envisioned by Bloch. Up to this point, he brings together the broadest definition of utopia, with a view to the real and possible future in a world of unceasing change and development. Through the dream and the dormant potential of the Not-Yet, Bloch is able to include all manner of ideas and possible worlds, and save the utopian element of every thought and social development. It is from this inclusive and optimistic point that Bloch can start to build his critique of ideology. Unfortunately, a discussion of the merits of his approach is beyond the scope of the thesis and would be somewhat tangential to our exploration of utopia. Suffice it to say that this highly optimistic and inclusive approach allows Bloch to find the utopian potential, or residue, almost everywhere, including in ideology[55]. However, this does not imply a wholly voluntarist or subjective future. From this foundation of inclusion, Bloch proceeds to a crucial distinction in the endeavour to effect change in the world.

1.3 Abstract & Concrete Utopia

In the context of my own distinction between descriptive and prescriptive utopianism, thusfar the work of Bloch has been largely descriptive. But with the introduction of the abstract-concrete dichotomy, the first evaluative element is introduced in his project. Having seen the development from the hopes of a better future, translated into dreams, to an analysis of the forms of dream and the identification of the daydream as the anticipatory element, we see that the utopian pervades all aspects of our lives. It is safe to say that the bulk of Bloch's work, *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, is devoted to the identification of these elements in film, theatre, art, history, literature, art, ideology and so on. However, the presence of these elements inherent in all of these domains does not imply that they themselves bring about utopia. Although Bloch may define these elements as utopistic, he introduces a dichotomy that serves to tell the fleeting wishes of a better world formed on the basis only of desire from realistic utopian dreams born of hope, i.e., abstract as opposed to concrete utopia.

We start with abstract utopia. In this context, Bloch sketches an image of everyman's quotidian fantasies: 'most people in the street look as if they are thinking about something else entirely. The something else is predominantly money, but also what it could be changed into'[56]. In these daydreams, one imagines a future in which the world remains the same, but the subjects place within it has changed. A large inheritance or a lottery win for example. In this form, the dream is purely compensatory, to distract and detach oneself from the actual and roam in the fantasy. Removed from this *being* is the real intent to change the world, the forward incentive of the drive to utopia.

Its corollary is concrete utopia. In this, the defining element is no longer compensatory, no longer a yearning to attain without effort what one desires, but it is anticipatory, a becoming conscious of the goal, task and the potential path to its attainment. Attached is the burden of realisation, connected to a real want as opposed to a mere desire, 'it reaches forward to a real possible future, and involves not merely wishfull but willfull thinking'[57]. For Bloch, this latter form embodies the drive to utopia affected through hope: 'there is never anything soft about conscious-

[54] Idem., p. vi
[55] Kellner, D. (unknown) 'Ernst Bloch, Utopia and Ideology Critique', retrieved 5-12-2011 from http://www.uta.edu/huma/illuminations/kell1.htm
[56] Bloch (1986), p. 33
[57] Levitas, R. (1997) 'Educated Hope: Ernst Bloch on Abstract and Concrete Utopia', in Daniel, J. & Moylan, T. (ed.) 'Not Yet Reconsidering Ernst Bloch', Verso, p. 67

known hope, but a will within it insists: it should be so, it must become so'[58].

This distinction is thus essential to Bloch, to divide between the fleeting exploration of desires and the real strive for betterment. It is only in the latter that we find hope, only in concrete utopia; for abstract utopia is mere desire. Furthermore, Bloch recognises an ever present derogatory element in discussions of utopia, accepts this notion and gives it a place. He makes abstract utopia the impossible, unattainable project but defines concrete utopia as that which accepts the limits of our world and herein strives for the greatest good. He writes: 'Pure wishful thinking has discredited utopias for centuries, both in pragmatic political terms and in all other expressions of what is desirable; just as if every utopia were an abstract one'[59]. But, the recognition of the abstract utopistic element allows even desires to be transformed into real wants. Thus, again Bloch finds potential in every element of being, mediated through the understanding and identification of the abstract and the concrete.

Now we see how daydreams and the anticipatory relate to this vision of utopia. The characteristics of the daydream as described by Bloch exemplify the forward dream, the anticipation and potential. The Not-Yet-Conscious and the Not-Yet-Become are the precursors of concrete utopia, and the vision of concrete utopia is the precursor of utopia itself. Following Bloch, we find the utopian in all aspects of life, but are also confronted with the fact that we must strip away the abstract utopian elements to reveal the concrete utopian core. Habermas went on to describe this process: 'within the ideological shell Bloch discovers the utopian core, within the yet false consciousness the true consciousness'[60].

1.4 The Rehabilitation of Utopia: Docta Spes

The process leading to the aforementioned distinction and the subsequent distinction itself, have significant consequences for Bloch's larger project, i.e., the rehabilitation of utopia. In order to facilitate the more positive reception of utopia, as Bloch desires, we must shed the derogatory connotations and establish utopia as a relevant working hypothesis. Above all this requires being critical of all elements of society, be they utopian or otherwise. The removal of abstract utopian elements, those merely wishful, fantastic, compensatory and escapist, thus reveals the concrete core through a process of critical analysis. As Bloch describes, this entails the following:

> 'with knowledge and removal of the finished *utopistic element*, with knowledge and removal of *abstract utopia*. But what then remains: the unfinished forward dream, the docta spes which can only be discredited by the bourgeoisie, - this seriously deserves the name utopia in carefully considered and carefully applied contrast to utopianism; in its brevity and new clarity, this expression then means the same as: *a methodical organ for the New, an objective aggregate state of what is coming up.*'[61]

This process is referred to by Bloch as *docta spes*, or 'educated hope'. Its form is the 'dialectic between reason and passion'[62], which finds the *act-content* of hope and knowledge of the *'concrete utopian horizon'*, or as Bloch says: 'The docta spes combine operates on this knowledge as expectant emotion in the Ratio, as Ratio in the expectant emotion. And predominant in this combine is no longer contemplation, which for centuries has only been related to What Has Become, but the participating, co-operative process attitude (…)'[63]. Thus Bloch makes *docta spes*, whose method is

[58] Bloch (1986), p. 147
[59] Bloch (1986), p. 145
[60] Cited in Levitas (2011), p. 105
[61] Idem., 157
[62] Levitas (1997), p. 70
[63] Bloch (1986) , p. 146

abstract and concrete utopia, the forward thinking active stance defined by the vision of utopia. With this we find a description of how utopia is to operate in our striving toward positive social transformation. Bloch wants the dreams to become real by way of the rational, to establish the path toward utopia:

> 'After all, the forward glance becomes all the stronger, the more lucidly it makes itself conscious. The dream in this glance seeks to be absolutely clear, and the premonition, the correct one, seeks to be quite plain. Only when reason starts to speak, does hope, in which there is no guile, begin to blossom again. The Not-Yet-Conscious itself must become *conscious* in its act, *known* in its content, as the process of dawning on the one hand, and what is dawning on the other. And so the point is reached where hope itself, this authentic expectant emotion in the forward dream, no longer just appears as a merely self-based mental feeling, (…), but in a *conscious-known* way as *utopian-function*'[64].

With this, Ernst Bloch's vision becomes palpable, and we can see how we are to be motivated by the expectant emotion and the anticipatory. Now, arriving at the destination envisioned by the philosophical project of Ernst Bloch, prior to implementation of the consequent selected ideals and values (his being Marxist), we have gained a deeper understanding of the method by which utopia can be elevated to a cultural and political tool. Furthermore, we have seen how this elevation can be justified. We can see the beauty of his work, defined by the militant optimism that pervades concrete utopia, and in which Bloch is able to incorporate almost all aspects of human life and endeavours.

Before we continue and consider the critique of Bloch's project, I want to explore how his project relates to the characteristics that have previously been identified as relevant to utopia, and, more specifically, relevant to prescriptive utopianism. In other words: how does Bloch define the function of utopia, does he consider the collective problem central, is a real-world vision of utopia prioritized or can fantasies serve as better vehicles for the becoming of utopia?

2. Bloch as Prescriptive Utopian: Function, Form & Content

2.1 Function

As Bloch consistently rejects defining utopia in terms of form, we will look first at what he considers the demarcating criterion: function. For him, as for many proponents of prescriptive utopianism, utopia has as its main function social transformation. But utopia is clearly not the only element required for social transformation, thus it becomes one of many cogs in the wheel of change. Additionally, whilst we have seen that the expression of the anticipatory, and utopian residue, persists in many different cultural forms from theatre to architecture, Bloch takes their common characteristic of *intention toward a better life* as defining for their utopian status. Thus, utopia functions first and foremost as a vessel to its own realisation.

But this function operates in an unceasing climate of change. There is no fixed end goal of humanity, no static utopia. Like Marx, Bloch regarded the need for perpetual change as essential to the project of social transformation. Because of this, the function of utopia takes on different dimensions. Wayne Hudson identifies four collaborative functions in his *The Marxist Philosophy of Ernst Bloch*:

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[64]   Bloch (1986), p. 144

'its *cognitive function* as a mode of operation of constructive reason, its *educative function* as a mythography which instructs men to will and desire more and better, its *anticipatory function* as a futurology of possibilities which later become actual, and its *causal function* as an agent of historical change'[65].

Ruth Levitas adds a fifth: its *expressive function* geared toward the articulation of dissatisfaction[66]. These dimensions combined serve to explicate how the general utopian function, as proposed by Bloch should be perceived.

The most general characteristic of prescriptive utopianism is clearly echoed by Ernst Bloch. However, his philosophy engages a more structural examination of the form that this general function takes. This allows it to be subdivided further by Hudson and Levitas, providing the first step to a clearer picture of how this function is to be realised.

2.2 Form

With this function at hand, we can mark the different elements of concrete utopia in line with the discussion in previous chapters. What has become clear is that there is no static Blochian utopia, therefore: all elements will relate to the picture of concrete utopia in the process of social transformation as described by Bloch.

(a) Possible World

The anticipatory elements of the Not-Yet-Conscious and the Not-Yet-Become, as proposed by Bloch, lay the foundation of the future better world. These are rooted in our past and are born of latent potential in many aspects of life, as described. From these dreams must flow the concrete ideas that go on to establish utopia. On this Bloch writes: 'The point of contact between dreams and life, without which dreams only yield abstract utopia, life only triviality, is given in the utopian capacity which is set on its feet and connected to the Real-Possible'[67].

This 'Real-Possible' is thus the object of the forward dream. But, although confined to possible worlds, the *possible* remains almost infinitely variable. For Bloch, the future is the realm of all possibility, but '- real possibility, rather than merely formal possibility'[68], meaning that Bloch does restrict what can occur, to that which is realistic. Moreover, he sees these possibilities as part of reality: 'Concrete utopia, understood both as content and as function, is within the real, but relates to what Bloch describes as *Front*, or *Novum*, that part of reality which is coming into being on the horizon of the real'[69]. Thus, we can see that Bloch not only rejects fantasy as useful to the process of becoming, but furthermore has a strict requirement of the real-possible.

(b) Space & Time

The *Front*, or *Novum*, are names given by Bloch to that which lies in the future, Not-Yet-Become. His persistent use of the anticipatory and the *forward* dream are further evidence of the unyielding future-orientation of Bloch's project. One can only speculate if now, after the fall of Stalinism and the failing of communism, paired with rejection of Marxism, Bloch would want a return to the time when Marxism was still set in the light of its positive potential, or would even

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[65]   Hudson, W. (1986) 'The Marxist Philosophy of Ernst Bloch', Macmillan, pp. 18-19
[66]   Levitas (2011), p. 117
[67]   Bloch (1986), pp. 145-146
[68]   Levitas (1997), p. 70
[69]   Ibid.,

now his ideology critique suffice to re-establish Marxism as prime candidate for social and political transformation.

Whatever the case may be, Bloch's process is undoubtedly a future-orientation endeavour. This time-restriction, paired with the restrictions placed on possible-world scenarios, support the placement of utopia in our world, in other words: on our earth. This is additionally supported by Bloch's approach to the collective problem.

(c) Collective Problem

The reference of Bloch to the real-possible already provides some insight into his view of the collective problem. His insistence on a sober understanding of what is possible in the future, underlines his belief that the process of change is concerned with the potential in our world alone. He seeks to solve the social problems that are faced by us, now. As he describes: 'Out of economically enlightened hunger comes today the decision to abolish all conditions in which man is an oppressed and long-lost being'[70], referring to this as 'human work, undertaken for the purpose of satisfying needs, transforming raw material into richer and richer utility values'[71]. This thoroughly Marxist approach is supported by Bloch with a quote from *Das Kapital I*: 'We are assuming work in a form in which it belongs exclusively *to man*'[72].

These quotes and the nature of Bloch's consistent reference to mankind, supported by his lengthy analysis of the human condition, shows that he is concerned with the collective problems of man on earth. Thus, his Marxist utopian vision, whose foundation rests on the collective conditions suffered by man, is universally applicable.

(d) Content

Having exhaustively examined the nature of utopia, and built a comprehensive theory of the process thereto and its foundation, Bloch does not leave his project without content. As is well known and has been said, Bloch's project was twofold: to rehabilitate the concept of utopia for its own sake, and to rehabilitate utopia within Marxism. The result is what has been called an unorthodox Marxism which, without a doubt, was ill-received by theorists and proponents of orthodox Marxism.

For Bloch, concrete utopia and Marxism are inextricably linked, as Marxism is the embodiment of concrete utopia. A concrete Marxist utopia for Bloch is tautological, however; although he never strays far from his Marxist ideals in *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*, Bloch manages to present the theory of process to utopia as distinct from his own beliefs. Nevertheless, his reasons for wanting to rehabilitate utopia within Marxism are clear. To Bloch, Marxism is where real, revolutionary change meets the aspirations of the human will in the process of social transformation. It recognises the importance of what is becoming, whilst revealing the process *to* utopia[73].

Bloch's assertions that: where reason and passion meet, we uncover 'educated hope' (docta spes), which reveal the 'concrete utopian horizon', is mirrored in his claim that Marxism contains a 'cold' and a 'warm' stream. The cold is that of analysis, the warm the passion and the dream. This double nature allows the process to be scientific, whilst the anticipatory and Not-Yet-Conscious remain, finding synthesis into the Not-Yet-Become which will be translated into the process of becoming. Thus Bloch finds that 'Utopia, as forward dreaming, is neither an esoteric by-way of culture, nor a distraction from the real business of class struggle, but a central and crucially important element in the production of the future'[74].

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[70] Bloch (1986), p. 76
[71] Ibid.,
[72] Cited from Bloch (1986), p. 76, quote from Marx, K. (1947) 'Das Kapital I', Dietz, p. 186
[73] Levitas (2011), p. 108
[74] Levitas (2011), p. 110

In this Blochian approach to Marxism and utopia, we find that there remains the important characteristic of progression, which Bloch values so highly. The historical process of anticipation and the residual utopian potential, (that is never fully *become* or even *conscious*), combine in Marxism. Thus Bloch justifies Marxism as the appropriate vehicle of change toward utopia.

(e) Human Progress

With Bloch's insistence on the ever developing world in mind, from the present into the future, through the forward dream, we can ask how his project relates to human progress; this being a crucial element to prescriptive utopianism in my view, and as I have argued in Chapter 2 of this thesis. The relationship of Bloch's project to utopia comes to the foreground in Levitas' analysis of abstract and concrete utopia in her article on educated hope:

'(…) for Bloch's critical project, the separation of abstract and concrete utopia, the identification of educated hope is essential. Without it, the argument that utopia is anticipatory falls flat on its face. At best, it becomes indistinguishable from the much repeated idealist theme common to early commentaries on utopia that utopian images have a value only as attainable goals, the pursuit of which constitutes a spur to human progress. And the centrality of educated hope arises from something quite opposed to this: it arises out of political, rather than epistemological necessity – out of the commitment to the realisation of utopia, through as well as its rehabilitation within Marxism.'[75]

The idealist theme to which Levitas refers is clearly echoed in my earlier defence of the concept of human progress. Now however, in light of Bloch's project, it can be properly nuanced in that although I still feel that the central role of utopia is to present an attainable ideal, I can distance myself from the idea that this should constitute a 'spur to human progress'; for what this *spur* implies is the use of utopia as a fixed point of reference in time. This intention toward a static utopia unsurprisingly generates criticism. But, in Bloch's concrete utopia, this image-function remains, but the static nature is rejected owing to the process in which concrete utopia is involved. With this, the steps undertaken toward a vision of a better future, remain progress, now similar, but not identical to the idealist theme as described by Levitas.

Her second point, concerning the necessity from which educated hope springs, reveals yet more about the relation of utopia to human progress. It is the *political* from which educated hope springs and not the epistemological, wherein the motivation to the realisation of utopia is born, as Levitas point out. This point is likewise significant for human progress, for the need and the reality of human progress stems not from the mere observation of human progress throughout our history, but is continuously reborn from the will to realise progress itself. This flux within the process of human progress is then reflective of the *Novum* as proposed by Bloch. All possibilities must remain open: the halt of human progress remains but one of the many possible futures, and is thus part of our current reality, just as for Bloch concrete utopia is within the realm of reality and forms the *Front* or *Novum*. Moreover, when we see educated hope as born of the political will to the realisation of utopia, and with this Bloch's project as prescriptive, associating the thesis of human progress with the Blochian project, reaffirms its position within prescriptive utopianism itself, as now its function can be captured in Bloch's terms and its appearance demonstrated in his own projection of the process to utopia.

Moreover, Bloch's theory of the Not-Yet is evidence of a particular understanding of the historical process. He finds that histories latent ideas come into consciousness and into 'the become', forming part of the *Novum*, subsequently subsiding again into latency but in a new and altered form. He sees the highest of the *Novum*, product of the utopian function - such as art, science

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[75] Levitas (1997), p. 78

and philosophy - as the very surplus 'which forms and preserves the substratum of the cultural inheritance, as the morning which is not only contained in the early day, but on a higher level also in the midday of a society and partly even in the twilight of its decline'[76] thus, 'all previous great culture is pre-appearance of something achieved, in so far as it could still be built up in image and thoughts on the panoramic heights of time, and thus not only in and for its time'[77]. This illustrates the passage of knowledge and ideas through time, some lying dormant in latency and potential for centuries, some inevitably lost. But Bloch's thesis demonstrates the possibility of progress, and with respect to man alone, the possibility of human progress.

This final relation of Bloch's philosophical project to the elements of prescriptive utopianism concludes the analysis of his work. What has become clear is that Bloch presents a thoroughly prescriptive utopianism that is, in all its elements, geared towards the realisation of utopia. This overview of the process shows how Bloch manages to justify every step of his rehabilitation of utopia. The strength of his analytic approach, paired with his militant optimism, succeed to revitalising utopia, and spelling out the need for its persistent use. This having been said, it is important to examine some of the criticisms presented against Bloch's project.

3. Criticism

A substantial project such as Bloch's does not remain free from criticism. Many of the early objections to *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* concerned its unorthodox Marxism. This, however, is not of direct concern to me as in this thesis, I want to look at the concept of utopia alone and I am not concerned with the content or values that Bloch, or any others, wish to ascribe to utopia. Therefore, I will look solely at some structural criticism of his project. My intention is to provide a more complete overview of Bloch's project as I wish to use several of his concepts in the final chapter of this thesis; in doing so, I will offer additional criticisms with respect to these concepts. For now, the structurally critical elements will provide sufficient cause for thought on the weaknesses of Bloch's philosophy. This initial examination of these weaknesses will be conducted largely with reference to the work of Ruth Levitas, as she concisely illustrates several relevant issues.

Levitas remarks that for Bloch, the subject matter of utopia is identified by the common characteristic of wanting a better life (the basis for a prescriptive utopia as we have seen). But she finds two problems with this approach: 'The first, which is a weakness in Bloch's treatment rather than a difficulty inherent in the approach itself, is that here is very little discussion of the significance of utopia's appearance in particular cultural forms – a fact remarked on by Lukács'[78]. This of course is true, as even though Bloch thoroughly analyses the appearance of utopia in different cultural forms, the subsequent significance of particular appearances is largely neglected. Levitas, however, further remarks that although this may be an arduous task, one the strengths of Bloch's work is that it allows for the theoretical possibility of such an endeavour. Of course, this highlights the difficulty of establishing a comprehensive concrete utopia, one that sparks real political action. Notably, this endeavour would take on a different form, more similar to the work of Karl Marx which aimed at, and had success in, facilitating political change.

The second problem proposed by Levitas at this juncture reads: 'If the field of utopian striving is virtually limitless, selection within it is necessary; (…). The abandonment of form as a criterion leads to a broadening of the field of study – which is then narrowed again by the distinction

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[76] Bloch (1986), p. 156
[77] Ibid.,
[78] Levitas (2011), p. 117

between abstract and concrete utopia. This distinction, while ostensibly made in terms of function, in practice relies upon content'[79]. In this quote, I identify two problems relating to Bloch's method; the first, before the ellipse, calls attention to the problem of selection; the second, after the ellipse, raises the issue of reliance on content as opposed to function.

The former issue asks the question: how are we to select which elements of utopian striving are genuine and effective? To this, of course, Bloch offers the distinction of abstract and concrete utopia, and a method of ideology critique. But herewith two further problems arise: 1. the criteria for this distinction are subjective and therefore necessarily contentious[80] and 2. Bloch fails to satisfactorily elaborate on how these criteria are then used to extract the utopian essence[81]. In defence of these criticisms I propose that within a utopian theory, more precisely within a prescriptive utopian theory, at some point a subjective choice has to be made in order to further the process of establishing utopia. For Bloch this occurs precisely at the distinction between abstract and concrete utopia. However, although this is unavoidable, the extent to which Bloch goes on to specify how *his* criteria function remains wanting. This recalls the first criticism of wanting an extension concerning the description of the method by which utopian elements function.

The latter criticism, concerning the reliance of content in the abstract/concrete distinction, similarly entails the notion that the criteria for selection are insufficiently elaborated. Levitas reiterates and further specifies this concern in the following:

> 'The distinction between abstract and concrete utopia cannot be made in terms of function other than in a completely tautological way. The content of utopia – as the transcendence of alienation – is the effective arbiter; the criteria are both abstract and unspecified'[82].

Of course, Levitas is right to say that the criteria are both 'abstract and unspecified', but it remains the question if this is avoidable. At some point, Bloch must specify his criteria, thereby making them concrete and the distinction fruitful. But so must every other prescriptive utopian. Additionally, it may be a virtue that these criteria remain unfilled in pure theory, as the departure from the theoretical provides the real content (this will be elaborated in the following chapter where the abstract/concrete distinction will be used).

This first set of criticisms pertains almost exclusively to the abstract/concrete distinction. But there are other fundamental difficulties in the Blochian project. For instance, just as in Mannheim's philosophy of utopia, to measure the success of Bloch's project, history must be the final arbiter[83]. Although poignant, this criticism may well apply to all projects of utopia. What is more disconcerting is the fact that Bloch seems to be 'reading his own concerns back into the history of culture or law in a way that is both subjective and teleological'[84]. This intent is summarized aptly by a quote from *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*:

> 'the world is full of propensity toward something, tendency toward something, latency of something, and this intended something means fulfilment of the intending. It means a world which is more adequate for us, without degrading suffering, anxiety, self-alienation, nothingness'[85].

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79 Ibid.,
80 Idem., p. 104
81 Idem., p. 107
82 Idem., p. 118
83 Idem., p. 104
84 Idem., p. 107
85 Bloch (1986), p. 18

We can clearly see that utopia is the result of the inherent potential in the past toward something. Naturally then, the very act of conceiving this *something*, and recognising its potential implementation, would be reading its inevitability back into the history of the world. Yet in this respect it seems less of a criticism than previously proclaimed, for is it not necessary for the defence of subjective content of utopia to be based, in part, on the past? And is it not logical to define this content with reference to what has been? It seems to me that an exhaustive defence of the chosen ideals for utopia is required in any case, and that in this the past must be incorporated. It is only natural then to be accused of reading one's own views into the history of mankind. Nevertheless this criticism remains crucial, as one must forever remain sceptical of the arguments that support a given position, be they abstract or historical, in order not to succumb to its dogmas.

With this discussion of both the abstract/concrete distinction and the role of history, I wish to discuss one final criticism offered by Levitas. For the sake of clarity of concept, a lengthy quote is required:

> 'There is a conflict between Bloch's insistence on the future as a realm of possibility and the teleology which posits socialism and disalienation as a goal. On one hand, Bloch recognises that 'the Nothing', as a possible future, 'is a utopian category': 'Nothing and All...are still in no way decided as utopian characters, as threatening or full-filling result-definitions of the world'[86]. On the other hand, the propensity of which the world is full 'means a world which is more adequate for us, without degrading, suffering, anxiety, self-alienation, nothingness'[87]. This conflict can be resolved only by the supposition that utopia is, as Bloch's argument suggests, rooted in human beings as an ontological category, a fundamental propensity; but Bloch also points out that Marxism insists on the social determination and historical transformation of human nature, and thus the absence of a 'fixed generic essence' of humanity.'[88]

This apparent paradox in Bloch's project is highly insightful. There does indeed appear to be a conflict between the limitless possibilities of the future, and a teleological view of process. And this can seemingly be solved only by defining utopia as an ontological category rooted in human nature as a fundamental propensity. Of course, Levitas rightfully points out that Bloch's support of Marxism extends to the idea of the indeterminacy of human nature, an aspect of Marxism that Bloch values highly. How then to solve this conflict? In my reading of Bloch I hope to have found some evidence as to the answer that he may have provided if faced with this apparent paradox, in an extension of a quote provided earlier in this chapter in discussion of Bloch's view on possible worlds, which now seems appropriate. It reads:

> 'The point of contact between dreams and life, without which dreams only yield abstract utopia, life only triviality, is given in the utopian capacity which is set on its feet and connected to the Real-Possible. And which in fact tendentially transcends what exists in each respective case, not only in our nature, but in that of the entire external world of process. Thus the only seemingly paradoxical concept of concrete utopia would be appropriate here (…).'[89]

Although it remains difficult to discern, I believe that this quote shows that the fundamental propensity to utopia need not be rooted as an ontological category in human beings as Levitas suggests, but that the utopian propensity 'tendentially transcends' both human nature, or 'our nature',

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[86] Citation inside quote from: Bloch (1986), p. 12
[87] Citation inside quote from: Idem., p. 18
[88] Levitas (2011), p. 118
[89] Bloch (1986), pp. 145-146

and indeed the very external world of process.

Bloch says that the utopian capacity springs from the meeting of dreams and life. This is the point where man meets the external world. Thus, the utopian is not in man alone, nor only in the external world. utopian capacity is produced in potential upon their collision and thus transcends the nature of both man and the external world.

Therefore human nature need not be fixed. Nevertheless, it remains crucial to the utopian. For instance, were our human nature to change to one in which we do not dream, then there would be no utopia, for the utopian capacity requires more than the potential of the physical world alone to manifest itself. This observation serves to underline the importance of dreaming to utopia. utopian capacity is beyond our human potential, and thus tendentially transcends the facts of each particular case. There is an abstract utopian capacity, greater than our human nature alone, and greater than the potential of the physical world.

The fact that human nature remains indeterminate does result in the possibility of 'Nothingness' to which Levitas refers. If human nature in no way facilitates the utopian capacity in the meeting of man and the external world, the utopian capacity will not be realised. Thus, were human nature to be such that it does not contribute to utopian capacity in its meeting with the external world, no utopia, nor steps toward utopia would result, as has been said. However, simultaneously, if the external world contributes no potential to the utopian capacity it also ceases to become realisable. For instance, if the physical conditions are such that no utopia can be reached, then the external world fails to facilitate utopia and hence the utopian capacity is not realised, no matter the extent or potential to which human nature wants to facilitate it.

Moreover, it is the indeterminacy of human nature itself which enables the multitude of possible futures, for at no point is man bound to act in accordance to his nature to facilitate any particular manifestation of this utopian capacity in the contact between dreams and life. In other words, he is not bound to react in any given way to his meeting with the external world. This opens infinite possible futures. Finally, the teleological view can be justified with reference to observation of our common nature, the tendency that most of us have or that is arguably prevalent in us. This may not be fixed, and indeed may differ over time, but there is little evidence that it differs so significantly between all people at any given time that we cannot refer to some form of human nature. Although an in-depth examination of human nature is beyond the scope of this essay, it is safe to say that human beings share a propensity to adapt for example, or exhibited social behaviour. The point is that these common propensities need not be fixed. Hence, in this way the teleological view can be reconciled with the supposition of infinite possibility.

To reiterate, Levitas observes that one cannot reconcile the belief in an infinite number of possible futures with a teleological world view observing the vast utopian potential, unless this potential is rooted in human nature. However, Bloch believes that human nature must remain unfixed. But, in the quote from The Principle of Hope we find that his utopian capacity need not be rooted in human nature, nor in the physical world, as it is a result of their meeting. Thus, the utopian capacity originates in the combination of the utopian potential in man and in the external world. Furthermore, this fact facilitates the possibility of an infinite number of possible futures, as human beings are not fixed to react to the physical world in any predetermined way. Moreover, the potential of change in man remains open, which is likely one of the reasons why both Marx and Bloch require human nature to be unfixed.

With this section on the criticisms of Bloch, I hope to have made clear that there are many questions possible that remain unanswered even within the impressive compendium of Bloch's study of utopia. What remains in this chapter is to compare briefly my own thoughts on prescriptive utopianism to the work of Ernst Bloch.

4. Prescriptive Utopianism & the Philosophy of Ernst Bloch

It has become abundantly clear that Bloch's philosophy is prescriptive. Not only does he clearly prescribe content to utopia, he also justifies this move by referring to the notion that utopia primarily facilitates change. But the function of affecting the world is said to be the primary or proper function, as it can fulfil more than this function alone. In chapter three, I noted that another function of utopia could be mere political commentary, similarly, Hudson and Levitas have summarized more generally the different functions that utopia can take in the philosophy of Bloch. These selfsame functions can be applied to prescriptive utopia in general: cognitive function as constructive reason, educative function as *docta spes*, anticipatory function as futurology, causal function the agent of change, and the added expressive function which abstractly captures the same function as suggested by the political commentary.

Thus we find that commentary on Bloch serves to highlight aspects of prescriptive utopianism beyond Bloch's particular perspective. We will find that this occurs often, as Bloch's philosophy is purely theoretical in principle, and identical to prescriptive utopianism at heart. Moreover, Bloch identifies Marxism as the logical result of his philosophy, he does not justify his philosophy with reference to the theory of Marxism.

We can identify further elements of overlap. For instance: the question of possible worlds. I have argued that a *possible* world is required for a fruitful conception of prescriptive utopia, although it is not formally required in order to comply to the primary function of wanting to effect positive change in the world. As we have seen, Bloch is more stringent in this condition. His is fervently geared toward actual change, and goes so far as to require the Real-Possible as opposed to the merely formally possible; though I feel that with this decision Bloch extends his reach beyond what is theoretically required, deeper into how one's personal action toward change should be devised. Above all, this additional requirement emphasises the seriousness of engagement in utopian thought. Nevertheless, I am in agreement that the vision of utopia should be a strict possible world. This then precludes both from Bloch's philosophy and my prescriptive utopianism the use of fantasies as what he refers to as concrete utopia.

In terms of time and space, I am also in agreement with Ernst Bloch. The relation to the possible world scenario prescribes a utopia of this world, and the most effective temporal category, for various reasons, remains that of the future. Similarly, the approaches to the collective problem are not controversial, but it must be said that these are choices within the frame of formal prescriptive utopia, required for its successful conception.

What remains of course is the content of utopia itself. Bloch's overtly Socialist sympathies are vehemently defended in *Das Prinzip Hoffnung*. Moreover, Bloch's approach is often convincing. His unorthodox Marxist views support his own project in that it is non-deterministic, driven by unrepressed critique, and faced toward the new. The image of such a politics is alluring, and one would not be the first to feel attracted to these ideas. But with the benefit of hindsight, doubts are raised alongside any Marxist sympathies. Apart from this departure in content, my theoretical views on utopia are very similar to Bloch's and, after having read his work, their theoretical justification has been inspired largely the justification of his own work. However, today the content of utopia must take on a form determined by its own time, as Bloch describes so elegantly. Furthermore, as has been said, it is not my intention to defend a specific content or political point of view, but only to understand how utopia functions, and when utopia is required, in our endeavour to change the world for the better.

To this end I want to take advantage of the extensive philosophy of Ernst Bloch, and sketch a meta-conception of how the different elements of utopia relate to each other. In this, I will use several of Bloch's concepts, most notably that between abstract and concrete utopia. I wish to show, in my final chapter, how we should conceive of the different elements of utopia, their functions and their relation to each other.

Chapter 5

Meta-Conception of Utopia

Conceptions of utopia and their interrelation

Having completed this preliminary survey of the extensive field of utopian studies, I now wish to sketch a picture of the interrelation between the different elements that I have identified. Our familiarity with Levitas' concepts of content, form and function, alongside my own division of descriptive and prescriptive utopia and the work of Ernst Bloch, constitute the foundation for mapping of the different utopian elements. Moreover, a further examination of abstract and concrete utopia will inspire the proposal of an alternative to the aforementioned categories. In this context, I wish to comment on the complexities that the element of time adds to the analysis of utopia by first examining the concepts of utopia as fixed in time, and subsequently, I will remark on the consequences of adding the temporal dimension, in order to provide a clearer and more complete picture of the concept utopia.

1. Inter-relation of Concepts, Fixed in Time

In order to sketch the inter-relation of concepts, we must take a step back from the examination of the relevant particular concepts in their own right. We will take the intricacies of the concepts as given and look more abstractly to their ontology. I will identify first two characteristics that all utopias have in common, after which their differences will become more apparent. Starting with the most general picture of utopia, I will proceed to the more specific conceptions of utopia and their related concepts. This will result in a piecemeal sketch of the conceptual field.

1.1 Common Characteristics & Utopia as a 'Snapshot'

There are two important aspects that utopias have in common: the first is that all utopias are expressions of desire. As has been said, this commonality is central to Ruth Levitas' definition of utopia and was selected for its highly inclusive nature. This shared characteristic relates to the content of utopias. Removed from this content, utopias still have in common the fact that they are products of their time. Moreover, they are 'objects' in time, so we can refer to them as products or images *of their* time.

In the sense that utopias are products of and objects in time, we can see a utopia as a 'snapshot' of the desires produced in a particular period, by a particular author. The reasons for its writing, and the desires that are expressed, are relevant to its author now and the whole is necessarily a product of its time. This 'snapshot' is then a conflation of influences, culminating in the birth of a utopia, often motivated by some deep dissatisfaction.

But, this static conception, as the *still* of an expression of desire, is complicated by its relation to time. In this, questions are raised about its relation to the past, and its interpretation in the future in the different guises that utopia may take. For now, I want to remove this temporal aspect from the concept as much as possible, in order to escape the trappings and complications that it entails. This move in itself is difficult and even vague, but necessary for conceptual clarification. What I wish to avoid, for the time being, is seeing utopia as a concept that *moves in time*; for

viewing the concept as unfixed, results in an increased number of aspects in which we can view its effect. Nevertheless, even this simplified approach requires the discussion of the concepts with respect to time, as this cannot be avoided.

As we have seen, utopia can take on a number of different forms and functions, and be constructed to produce infinite content. Yet, it is necessarily the end-point of a single history, a single series of events leading up to the present. At the same time, it is the starting-point of a myriad of possible futures. This supposition is a matter of disagreement, but I will hold, in line with Marx and Bloch, that the future is not fixed, that there is no physical, nor any other, complete determinism. Thus, taking the conception of utopia as a 'snapshot', we can situate it at the centre of two extremes, with one physical past prior and an infinite number of possibilities in the future.

Of course, there is much incongruity in the stories of our past, and the projections of our future, but these are solely the result of interpretation. However, there is an objective physical past and physical possible future that transcends these subjective notions. Of course, this past and future reality is one which we cannot view nor describe objectively, but one we know is there.

Although the discussion of time and reality may seem superfluous, it is important to our notions of utopia for several reasons. Firstly, it shows that owing to the fact that every utopia is in part the result of a common past, they are all related. Likewise, they are common in that they produce future. Secondly, the establishment of the fact that there is a myriad of possible futures will serve to distinguish between the different utopias in what follows. Thirdly, it aids our understanding of the conceptualisation of utopia in terms that view time as a fixed notion, temporarily.

With this, we can view our most basic conception of utopia as a 'snapshot' of desire in time, of the time in which it was written, and as a result of a particular past, that remains open to interpretation and move to the subdivision of the complete 'set' of utopias, starting with abstract utopia.

1.2 Abstract Utopia

As we know, abstract utopia is an expression of desire but not of hope. Therefore, it need not bear any relation to a particular possible future, nor any particular past. Although there may be no need for this relation, the possibility thereof remains open. Thus, an abstract utopia can take the form of the desire to return to the nomadic human conditions of Neanderthals, for instance. In this example, it has a definite relation to the past, or at least an interpretation of the past. Similarly, one could conceive of an abstract utopia that envisions peace on Earth owing to the return of Christ. This particular utopia has a definite relation to a possible future, namely peace on Earth, but involving heavenly intervention, making it unrealistic and descriptive. This contrasts what I have used as the archetypical abstract utopia, namely Cockaygne. This land where the streams flow with wine and roasted chickens fly abound, bears, in itself, no necessary relation to past nor future.

1.3 Descriptive Utopianism

In the relevant senses, descriptive utopianism is very similar to abstract utopia, though they are not the same. Just as abstract utopia bears no necessary relation to a possible future, descriptive utopianism need not take time into account. The sense in which they differ is that a descriptive utopian can devise a program to utopia with practical relevance, whilst not necessarily endorsing the proposed social transformation. He or she can imagine a world in which mankind lives happily under certain conditions, say under dictatorial rule, yet maintain that these are not utopistic in his or her opinion, as it were.

Conversely, although a descriptive utopia is not necessarily abstract, all abstract utopias are necessarily descriptive. A utopia is abstract if its content holds some desires that cannot reasonably be expected to manifest themselves in a possible futures, because one cannot reasonably wish to defend unrealistic notions of desire as concrete hope.

1.4 Concrete Utopia

Concrete utopia, on the other hand, does just this. It is at heart a reasoned conception of a scenario, and the steps to be undertaken to reach it result in a better world. Crucially, concrete utopia differs from abstract utopia, beyond the two points of commonality as described above, in that it relates specifically to a possible future. Although just as much the result of a fixed past as abstract utopia, confronted with the myriad of possible futures, it sketched one *particular* branch of the extensive tree diagram of possible futures.

Concrete utopia sets out to describe this one particular possible future in as much detail as possible. As every step in time is a necessary negation of the infinite alternate futures, a selection is made and it is this selection that concrete utopia wishes to influence, even wishes to effect or create. Moreover, and again as opposed to abstract utopia, concrete utopia is fixated with the past. The past remains crucial for reasons of justification, meaning the ideals described need to be reasoned on the basis of the past. Bloch describes this process extensively as the anticipatory in history, and as such is charged with reading his own opinion back into history. However, as has been argued, this is a necessary step of concrete utopia. We can see again that concrete utopia is an expression of hope, not of mere desire.

1.5 Prescriptive Utopianism

Thus, we can see that concrete utopia is a prescriptive utopianism. But again, as in the relationship between descriptive utopianism and abstract utopia, prescriptive utopianism cannot be identified with concrete utopia. However, converse to the descriptive/abstract relationship, it is not possible for a prescriptive utopia to be abstract. As has been said: a utopia is abstract if its content holds some desires that cannot reasonably be expected to manifest themselves in a possible futures, thus one cannot reasonably wish to defend unrealistic notions of desire as concrete hope. Meaning, whereas a descriptive utopia can be concrete, an abstract utopia cannot be prescriptive.

The sense then in which a utopia can be prescriptive, yet not concrete, thus requires an alternate possibility. It is this possibility that I want to discuss in the following subsection, and it a possibility that will shed new light on the conception of utopia thus far.

2. Pure/Absolute/Theoretical Utopia

Besides abstract utopia as the expression of a fleeting desire, and its corollary concrete utopia, there is, I believe, a third alternative that cannot be subsumed into either category. This alternate category differs from abstract utopia in that it does not express desire alone, nor does it necessarily hold an unrealistic view of the future. Simultaneously, it differs from concrete utopia in that it does not set out to present overtly practical steps to, nor prescribe the content of, utopia. It is an exercise in pure theory, and tests the compatibility of possible utopian values themselves. This utopia is the result of an abstract exercise in counter-factual reasoning that results in a series of values that may or may not be compatible. The object of this exercise is to clarify the theoretical possibility of holding certain values and beliefs. With this, we can characterise it as *pure* or *absolute*

or *theoretical* utopia. For now, I will refer to this third category then as 'theoretical utopia', the reasons for my reluctance will become clear below. However, first I wish to examine more closely the reasons for introducing this alternative.

2.1 Theoretical Utopia

A theoretical utopia is an exercise in testing the compatibility of certain values under certain conditions. For instance, one may ask if a particular theory of equality is compatible with the value of the right to private property. Or, one may subject a particular moral code to criticism to find out if certain contradictions arise. It is the object of such endeavours to find out if the perceived plans of implementing change are sound. Such activity is not only required for complex tasks, but also one at which human beings excel above all other species. An imaginative quote from Marx, used by Bloch to illustrate the notion of the forward dream, is demonstrative here.

> 'A spider carries out operations which resemble those of a weaver, and a bee puts many human builders to shame with the building of its wax cells. But what distinguishes the worst builder from the best bee from the outset, is that he has built the cell in his head before he builds it in wax, at the end of the work process there is a result which already existed in the *imagination of the worker* at the beginning of that process, i.e. already existed *ideally*'.[90]

It is this sense in which there exists an *ideal* of the proposed changes that is characteristic of theoretical utopia. To design a utopia, before turning to understanding the problems of its implementation, may well be necessary given the complexity of both exercises. The question of the compatibility of starting principles is raised in this project. Such endeavours may result in a list of different values that are compatible and create a just society, for instance.

In my view, the exercise is exemplified by John Rawls' work *A Theory of Justice*. In this, he engages in what he calls 'Ideal Theory', as opposed to non-Ideal Theory. He describes this in the following:

> 'The intuitive idea is to split the theory of justice into two parts. The first or ideal part assumes strict compliance and works out of principles that characterize a well-ordered society under favorable conditions. It develops the conception of a perfectly just basic structure and the corresponding duties and obligations of persons under fixed constraints of life'.[91]

As can be seen, Rawls is here engaged in the conception of the *principles* that are compatible and form a 'perfectly just basic structure' of society. In effect he draws a picture of utopia; a utopia of social justice.

However, even from this brief description, it is obvious that this is not a conception of concrete utopia. The decision to disregard the non-ideal, and to hold favourable circumstances, result in theory based on a somewhat idealised view of society. Furthermore, this exercise in itself lacks the prescription of practical interventions, an element central to concrete utopia. Moreover, as concrete utopia is defined as selecting one possible future from the myriad of possibility, theoretical utopia is not particularly concerned with the future at all.

This having been said, one may wish to relegate theoretical utopia to abstract utopia. But I fear that this would be a mistake. One should not disregard the value of the theoretical exercise toward the establishment of utopia. Of this fact the concrete utopian is most aware. Furthermore, a

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[90]   Bloch (1986), p. 76
[91]   Rawls (1999), p. 216

theoretical utopia, such as that of John Rawls, is not preoccupied with the fulfilment of desire, nor does it sketch a *wholly* unrealistic image. Instead, it asks after the theoretical possibility of hope for particular betterment owing to certain principles. Furthermore, it does not sketch an unrealistic world, but an idealised world.

Moreover, theoretical utopia does not necessarily fit entirely into the mould of descriptive utopia, nor of prescriptive utopia. For one, a theoretical utopia *can* be completely descriptive. The exercise of testing the values prescribed by others for their compatibility can be completed without introducing alternate values. Simultaneously, a successful test of theoretical possibility can be presented as a strong argument for the implementation of a particular set of ideals, thus being a prescriptive exercise. In addition, the exercise of creating a theoretical utopia can, in line with concrete utopia, be born of a deep-seeded desire to change the world for the better. Hence, this emphasises the fact that abstract utopia cannot be identified with descriptive utopianism, and that concrete utopia cannot be identified with prescriptive utopianism, as theoretical utopia can be both descriptive or prescriptive.

Finally, it remains a problem of utopia to project into the distant future the possibilities of our world. This much is clear. There is then a natural tendency toward ever more general terms in which the utopian is framed. This is a necessary result of the myriad of possibilities that lie ahead. Theoretical utopia is, in many respects, an effort to conceptualise the generalised ideals and their potential compatibility. Thus, even with our inability to describe accurately the distant future, we can bridge the gap between now and then by theorising in generality. This in itself carries special significance as type of utopia.

Thus, this third category is proposed to name the gap into which certain theories of utopia fall. The relevance and further importance of this category will be explicated in the section below where it is further juxtaposed with the other categories of utopia, in a problem of definition.

2.2 Problem of Naming

The reluctance to name this third category 'theoretical utopia', stems from the fact that I believe that this title is not entirely befitting. For one thing, 'theoretical utopia' is somewhat tautological, as all utopias are theoretical by definition. But, it is the best alternative to what I feel is the more accurate description, namely: 'abstract utopia'. Obviously, having emphatically used the Blochian distinction, it would be inappropriate to label this new category as such. However, this does give us pause to further consider the merits of an alternate set of names.

The reason why Bloch uses the term abstract utopia is at least twofold. Firstly, Bloch required a corollary to the name 'concrete utopia'. As the addition of the adjective serves to strengthen and denote the concept, Bloch could not leave its counterpart defined simply as utopia. Secondly, Bloch was keen on removing the overtly negative connotations form the term utopia. Therefore, again abstract utopia could not be named simply 'utopia', as the negative connotations would remain for both it and concrete utopia; instead, he had to remove the connotations from concrete utopia in order to divert all the negative aspects of utopia to the abstract, or non-practical.

In line with Bloch, I feel that 'concrete utopia' is an appropriate name for the particular concept. However, as has been said, I feel that 'abstract utopia' is most appropriate for what is now 'theoretical utopia', as this category is concerned with abstract principles, their compatibility and relationship. In order to hold Bloch's second category in the same regard, and keep the benefits of disposing onto it the negative connotations of utopia, I would call it a 'fantasy'. This label is, in all relevant respects, a reflection of what abstract utopia is. However, the choice for this concept would leave Bloch with the opposition between 'fantasy' and 'utopia', where utopia would be concrete. Of course, the negative connotations would then remain. Moreover, the concept 'fantasy' can relate to so much more than utopia alone. It is important then, to emphasise the inherent relation to societies of the concept. Thus, 'fantastic utopia' becomes an alternative. However, the connotations of the

word 'fantastic' are not relevant in this form. What we are left with then is 'utopian fantasy' or 'utopistic fantasy'. Herein, what was once 'abstract utopia' retains its usefulness, whilst the other categories are given their proper name. Thus we have 'concrete utopia', 'utopistic fantasy' and 'abstract utopia'.

Bloch's choice to juxtapose concrete and abstract utopia highlights one additional feature of the conceptual field. Where Bloch creates two concepts that are opposites, one may ask what the opposite of theoretical utopia would involve: the obvious response being 'practical utopia'. However, being the opposite of theoretical utopia, this would entail a utopian theory that is purely practical, one that only sets out direct laws and rules of action to society. But, I contend, that such a conception of utopia is not possible. Indeed, every conception of utopia needs some theory of ideals, or some abstract concepts, before any practical measures can be envisioned.

What this does reveal is an element of the relationship between concrete and theoretical utopia. Where the former necessarily provides a set of practical principles, the latter is necessarily removed from this endeavour. But, the supposition that a purely practical utopia is not possible, which removed the possibility of a concept like 'practical utopia', serves to illustrate that concrete utopia then must be the ideal fusion of sound theoretical theory and practical principles. Again, this idea speaks to the benefits of regarding concrete utopia as bastion of hope, and not merely of desire.

This final observation leads me to consider the triage of extremes by which to classify utopia. Thus, the following section aims to clarify the complicated definition of particular utopias, as most are not easily classified under one of the three concepts alone. Although this note on the terms is relevant, for the remainder of this thesis I will refer to the concepts by their original names: concrete, abstract and theoretical utopia.

3. Axes of the Utopian

One can now imagine three different axes by which a utopia can be plotted. One is the extent to which a given utopia is comprised of theory, another the extent to which it is a fantasy and the third is the extent to which it offers practical maxims. Thus, we are left with a three-dimensional space on which to plot different utopias. The benefit of this exercise would be to view the relationship between different utopias according to the three principles.

Considering Rawlsian Ideal Theory as a utopia of social justice, we can plot the 'snapshot' or 'image' of this society in a place high on the axis of theory, as it is largely a theoretical exercise. Thus, it would be positioned low on the theory of practicality, denoted as the extent to which practical rules are provided. Furthermore, it would be on the near end of the third axis of fantasy, as although Rawls envisions some idealised circumstances, his are not within the realm of pure fantasy.

Another utopia that clarifies this plotting is that of Cockaygne. Considering its utopian status, we find that it is situated on the far end of the fantasy-axis, as its image is fantastic to say the least. In terms of practicality, it does not set out any rules of behaviour, nor any principles for its attainment, thereby scoring low on the axis of practicality. Similarly, there is little or no theory of the ideals that are involved in this Dionysian world.

The final extreme is more difficult to typify as I have argued that a purely 'practical utopia' is not possible. However, there are works of utopia that focus heavily on the means of attaining the ideals presented. One example of this is B.F. Skinner's *Walden Two*. In this, the theoretical aspect is that of behaviour modification. But, taking these as the utopian ideals, the novel sets out to demonstrate the practical possibilities of a society founded on this theory. Thus, *Walden Two* would feature on the far end of practicality, whilst retaining moderate advancement on the axis of theory. The extent to which it is fantasy is obviously a matter of contention, but one dare say that there is fantasy involved[92].

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[92] In addition, the fact that *Walden Two* has been used a blueprint for the foundation of 'real-world'

This final observation makes an important point. The placement of the utopias on these scales is always a matter of contention. But, it nevertheless serves to highlight the relation between the variety of utopias. Moreover, it can clarify the functions of the concepts we have used to analyse utopia. For instance, where the extreme of fantasy is a purely abstract utopia, we have found that concrete utopia must be the epitome of both practicality and theory. An added benefit of such a scale is the demonstration of the fact that most utopias are not easily classified into any of the categories as described. Often a utopia is partly theoretical, partly practical and partly fantasy. A case in point would be, of course, Thomas More's own *Utopia*. In this work we see such theoretical elements as the values of freedom of religion, no private property and equality of men alongside such practical prescriptions as communal housing, cyclical labour arrangements and the absence of a monetary system. But, although More's work shows both theoretical and practical elements, it is not necessarily a concrete utopia. Besides the aforementioned theoretical and practical elements, there are also fantastical elements in his work, such as the idea that a nation state can absolutely defend itself from foreign invaders. Thus, we can see that plotting a utopia within this field has the added benefit of explicating the different elements, its benefits and its shortcomings.

These axes by which to plot utopia serve as a conceptual tool to clarify the different utopias and their relationships. What they do not do is give us an indication of the different categories by which Levitas differentiates between utopias. Nothing is revealed about the content, form or function of the utopias plotted, however, one is likely to notice trends in terms of the aforementioned relative to the area in which the utopias are plotted. For instance, a utopia that tends toward concrete utopia, with thorough theoretical and practical design, will most often have a function of social transformation. Similarly, the more fantastic utopias, that often take the form of myth, are likely to be entertainment and social commentary, rather than blueprints for social revolution.

The proposed axes differ from Levitas' categories in that the first is a differential tool, whilst the second is a definitional tool. Thus, these axes are a more abstract exercise in conceptualisation, the benefit of which is conceptual clarity. But, both approaches can be used simultaneously to reveal relationships between different utopias. Thus, one could select utopias based on content, form or function and plot these on the axes to reveal their common characteristic.

One element that both approaches have difficulty taking into account is the time in which utopias were written. For instance, in a time when criticism of the ruling power was dangerous, the critic could take refuge in a fantasy that functioned as social commentary, disguised as a story, often taking the form of a myth. This of course can be seen in both More's *Utopia* and Fénelon's *Telemachus*. Such characterisation is difficult under both approaches, although the division in axes can deal with a group of utopias from a certain time period. E.g., a particular set of utopias defined as 'being written in a time when overtly criticising the established order was a capital offence', may be plotted of the axes and reveal a tendency toward fantasy. Additionally, utopias written by modern philosophers may reveal a tendency toward theory-laden accounts, or those written by economists may reveal a practical bias.

It is not my primary intention to present a methodology for analysing utopias, but rather to explore the concept itself. The addition of theoretical utopia to abstract and concrete utopia, and their subsequent division in terms of axes, is above all an endeavour to describe the concept utopia itself. What remains is one final analysis of this versatile concept within the dimension of a changing time. Where viewing utopia as fixed in time was highly advantageous to the analysis of the concept, a utopia that moves in time adds an important dimension, and reveals significant common aspects beyond what can be identified with a fixed view of time, crucial to a complete picture.

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utopian communities, speaks to its highly practical applicability.

4. Utopias in Time

Thus, the picture of the inter-relation of concepts above was drawn with reference to fixed concepts. Once the added dimension of time is introduced, the difficulties involves in labelling utopia become ever more apparent. In this final section, I want to examine some of the consequences of viewing utopias within a moving dimension of time.

4.1 Effect & Interpretations

Even framed in ever developing time, we can still view utopia as a 'snapshot', in fact, this may be the only way that we can view the finished product. Of course, only at the very moment that the picture of utopia is completed is it current. Immediately after, it takes a place in history as something to be referred to from the immediate, and from then on ever more distant past. With this, we can start to view the effects that a particular utopia has after its production. These effects are then compiled with reference to an object unfixed in time, or a snapshot of time. However, the fact remains that all commentary is interpretation and thereby subjective.

Even taking a fixed concrete utopia, which would be the ideal object of implementation, in the efforts to build this society, one would in essence be working toward something that is *like* the given object. Every effort toward the ideal is in fact essentially a transformation and interpretation of what was written. As a result, the different elements that we have thusfar characterised and isolated, change depending on the interpretation of their meaning. How these different aspects may be affected will be discussed below starting with Levitas' triage of content, form and function.

4.2 Content, Form & Function Through Time

The most striking aspect of the added dimension of time is that the classification of certain characteristics can change dramatically. For instance, if we take a utopia based on the millennial beliefs, or the coming of Christ, we may note their practical prescriptions for preparing the earth for His second coming are not at all unreasonable within a strongly religious society or time. But, non-religious readers of these utopias may later view these prescriptions not as prescriptive content, but as rituals with no practical benefit and that thus cannot be taken as actual utopian content today.

Similarly, it is not unreasonable to assume that at some point in time, Plato's account of *Atlantis* was viewed as an historical record of a real society. Thus, this utopia has taken the form of an historical narrative. Now, far removed from the time in which it was written, and with much greater knowledge of world geography for instance, we view its form as one of myth, designed to transfer a moral message.

The most immediate change with the effect of time can often be seen in terms of function. For instance, the work of Karl Marx is largely a work of utopia, and has as its function social transformation. Yet only a decade later we can see that although this function was highly successful in terms of inspiring transformation itself, the results were largely disastrous. The work of Marx thus takes on a completely different function, no longer the instigator of social transformation, but much more a reference or study of the potential of the communist ideals, or even as a warning to future instigators of social change. It is thus diverted from its intended function over an arguably short period of time.[93]

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[93] Similarly, More's Utopia was originally intended to function as social criticism, now it hold the position of being the archetypical utopia, and original function is no longer relevant.

4.3 Concrete, Abstract & Theoretical Utopia

Moreover, and with reference to Ernst Bloch, the work of Marx was arguably a concrete utopia, or in any case much closer to concreteness than we usually come. Nevertheless, where for a long time his utopia was of great influence, time has told us that the principles, when radically applied, are not necessarily concrete steps to utopia. In fact, the loss of its concreteness pushes it ever more into the realm of abstract utopia, a fact that would be severely frowned upon by Bloch himself. Moreover, we may now view the work of Marx ever more as a theoretical utopia. If we downplay the practical guidelines as prescribed by Marx, and emphasize the theory of communism, we may come to a sound theoretical utopia that creates a possible picture of complementary values and principles.

Thus, the rise and fall of communism creates a clear picture of changing form and function of utopias, alongside a variation in the labels of concrete, abstract and theoretical. Although this example may be close at hand, it nevertheless aptly demonstrates how the passage of time can influence the different categories that we have identified.

4.4 Axes of Utopia Through Time

With this it becomes clear that the placement of utopia on the three axes also varies significantly over time. For instance, although it may seem as if a theoretical utopia should remain valid throughout history as it is abstracted from the real world, even theory changes significantly over time. Thus, many of the ´real-world' utopian projects of the 1960's, such as those based on B.F. Skinner's *Walden Two*, were based on the idea that there was in innate tendency in nature for ecosystems to tend toward harmony[94]. This consensus concerning this theory of natural self-regulation, highly influential in 20th century ecology, has only recently wavered. Thus, we can now view the utopias based on this theory in a completely different light because the fundamental and underlying theories change; a process which can occur very rapidly as in the case of the theory of environmental harmony.

Similarly, utopias can be cast in an entirely different light over time in terms of fantasy. Examples of the changing degrees of fantasy can undoubtedly be found in every single utopia. To start, there are so many examples of utopian solutions to problems that have already ceased to be fantasy; this can range from flying vehicles to 'happy pills'. Similarly, there may be elements that were at one time not considered fantasy, but that are fantasy now. Take for instance the kingdom of Atlantis, or the millennial belief in the coming of Christ.

Lastly, practicality is just as much at the changing mercy of time. For instance, the island of Utopia is free from the threat of foreign invaders because of its well-defended coastline and impenetrable defences. At this time, perfect defensive isolation of a society may have seemed possible, and even practical. Now, however, we view this as highly impractical and even unachievable. In turn, it may never have been practical to design a utopia for all of mankind. Now it seems like there is no other option. Moreover, the practicality of such an endeavour has greatly increased with modern communication and technology.

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[94] See the work of Sir Arthur Tansley, who championed the term 'ecosystem'; see also: 'All Watched Over By Machines', by Adam Curtis, BBC 2011

4.5 Past, Present, Process

One final way in which I wish to clarify the problems involved with taking into account the dimension of time, is to examine separately the role of the past, the present and the process by which utopia is to be achieved in the future. For abstract utopia, these are most often of little relevance, as although they may be interpreted with respect to the past, present and future, most often their conception bears no particular relation to these dimensions, with the exception of the present which is often the subject of abstract utopia.

However, concrete utopia is highly reliant on these different aspects. As has been said, concrete utopia justifies its theory based on the past. Thus, the subjective interpretation of this past is of great consequence to its effectiveness. Notably, theories that may be taken as evident at 'their' time of production and reception, may be debunked or falsified at a later date. The consequence of such an occurrence can be far reaching, as has been shown in the analysis of theoretical utopia. Similarly, the circumstances of (what is at the time of conception) the present, fall instantly into the domain of history. Thus, some problems become much more prevalent, such as the current issue of overpopulation, which was less relevant 200 years ago. Other problems become much less so, or have been addressed in the meantime. One example of this is the problem of securing clean drinking water, an issue which is addressed in More's *Utopia* which is much less prevalent in most parts of our contemporary society.

Here, the issue of understanding and even interpreting the present becomes apparent. Opinions remain divided on what the most prevalent problems of our time are, and thus the need for prioritizing contemporary issues to be dealt with, becomes relevant. Thus, utopia, as a solution to current problems, faces both the selection of these problems and the justification of the problems in a past that is open to interpretation. In addition, the selection of one particular future, i.e., the result of the plan to solve the proposed problems, highlights the fact that every step taken into the future determines the extent to which these problems are solved and, in turn, which are relevant. Moreover, often we may move to what may be a branch of possible futures that was not initially envisioned, or that does not seem to solve the problems that were proclaimed as priorities. A concrete utopia, then, must be able to deal with the change in time if it hopes to be effective.

One solution to this final problem is prevalent in modern theories of utopia; these often emphasize the need for a non-fixed theory, or a means of effecting utopia within flux of time. We have seen in Bloch's philosophy that he repeatedly emphasizes the non-fixed conception of human nature and of physical possibility. Whilst this is an effective means of taking into account changes over time, one consequence of this need is an ever more theoretical account of utopia. Here we can see another reason for regarding theoretical utopia as separate from concrete and abstract utopia.

5. The Inter-relation of Concepts in Time

Thus, we can see that time significantly complicates our understanding of the concept of utopia. I hope to have shown that taking utopias as reasonably fixed in time has the benefit of simplifying their comparison and analysis, whilst emphasizing that the time-dimension remains of crucial importance to understanding their ontology.

With the benefit of our initial exploration of the concept utopia, Levitas' division of categories and Bloch's philosophy, I hope to have provided a detailed account of different ways in which we can understand utopia. In addition, the introduction of the category of 'theoretical utopia' enables the plotting of three axes wherein utopias can be placed and thus compared. This can serve as an alternative approach to utopia alongside Levitas' threefold category guidance to the definition of utopia.

Conclusion

Concluding this exploration of utopia with a discussion of the inter-relation of concepts, marks the return to a more abstract and distant view of the conceptual field. This point was made by first examining possible definitions of utopia largely based on the categories content, form and function, as proposed by Ruth Levitas in her work *The Concept Utopia*. She presented examples of many different definitions, by many different scholars of utopia. Most importantly, she arrived at the highly inclusive definition that all utopias are the expression of desire.

Yet, so many scholars aim at so much more than mere expression of desire. Often there is a real hope for social transformation, a desire to *effect* change in the world. This led to my proposal of two methods of approaching the utopian; the descriptive and the prescriptive. After which, it was made clear that there is often a real desire toward human progress, and a real need to believe in the possibility thereof, lest we succumb to a fatalistic view of our future

This prescriptive intention was found to result in particular tendencies in possible content, form and function that reveal commonalities in prescriptive utopias. This approach is typified by the work of Ernst Bloch, who presents an extensive philosophy of utopia and a reappraisal of its use. Moreover, his contribution to the study of utopia provides new insights into the concept. With such ideas as the forward dream, the anticipatory, the not-yet-conscious and the not-yet-become, abstract and concrete utopia, docta spes, the front and the Novum, he provides us with the tools for a deeper understanding of the concept.

This facilitated a more complete account of the concept utopia. The final chapter of this thesis attempted to sketch this account, starting with the acknowledgement that time played a significant role in our understanding of it. Removing this complication, simplified the demonstration of the fact that abstract utopia could not be identified with descriptive utopianism, and that concrete utopia could not be identified with prescriptive utopianism. However, in this, it became clear that a third category of utopia was needed to name the gap left in this classification, i.e., that of theoretical utopia.

With these three concepts it became clear that all utopias could be plotted on three categorical axes: the theoretical, the fantasy, and the practical. With this, we gained a new tool of comparison. However, it remained necessary to understand the complication that the dimension of time adds to our understanding of utopia. With this, we returned to the fact that utopias are not easily analysed, nor compared, and that there remains a great deal of interpretation in all efforts to understand the concept.

In conclusion, I hope to have provided an overview of the concept utopia, alongside an account of the need for its rehabilitation and prolonged use; for where would mankind be without the hope for a better future, and without a picture of what this new world could be like. Without hope we would be lost, and without utopia to guide us, we would face our future devoid of any direction and be blind to the possibility of a better world.

Epilogue

'Bloch's overall project has been described as an intention
to fill the gap into which the Gods were imagined'[95]

This quote aptly demonstrates the heights and depths of the utopian project. Its subject is both the entire external world, and the internal world of the self. In this, the quest for utopia, in its many guises, touches at the very heart of philosophy: 'the meaning of life'. The lifelong search for a God long removed from his throne.

But how strange that an expression such as 'the meaning of life' can become a cliché. How odd that Nietzsche's "God is dead" can be incited so trivially. Likewise, how is it possible that utopia has received such overtly negative connotations?

Sad though it may be, we require a rehabilitation of utopia, a project like Bloch's. With this, there is hope that utopia can again inspire his militant optimism about the world. But far from being a substitute for religion, Bloch's project simply aims at holding these questions in serious regard once again. This in itself must be sufficient to rehabilitate the project of bettering our world.

But, it is not my intention here to be melodramatic about the lack of utopian engagement in our world. Nevertheless, in learning more about utopia and reading Ernst Bloch, I have taken these questions to heart and they have strengthened in me a militant optimism toward the world. However, even though I have tried to be thorough in my examination, there are many questions that I have not been able to ask, let alone answer. The breadth of the topic and its fundamental nature, prevent anyone from ever completing the study of this ideal.

Below, I want to take a moment to consider, very briefly, the long list of topics that have sparked my interest throughout the six months of writing this thesis, but for which I did not find a suitable place. To start, some relatively concrete issues relating to utopia; such as war and population. Then, unto more abstract notions no less fundamental; such as happiness and enlightenment. Next, I will look briefly at my intuitions on the process that leads to utopia and finally some questions relating to my thesis in particular.

The notion that Bloch has attempted to fill the gap into which the Gods were imagined draws to mind a very interesting and highly controversial topic: that of religion. The question of whether there is a place for organized religion in utopia is a crucial one. The death of God may have been announced, but religion still pervades our societies. Although I will not here list utopias that do and do not incorporate religion, it is safe to say that an oft cited solution in total freedom of practice.

There has been mention of religion in my analysis of the concept of utopia. Here I refer to the millennial beliefs in the second coming, or utopia by deus ex machina. The rejection of these as viable prescriptive utopias offers in interesting observation of the role of religion. One could argue that substituting utopia with the afterlife, and engaging the utopian only is this guise, reduces the chance of real change for the better in our world. This idea, of course, remains controversial.

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[95] Levitas (1997), p. 114; cited from Solomon, M. (1972) 'Marx and Bloch: Reflections of Utopia and Art', *Telos*, 13, p. 79

Arguably, religious individuals are much more inclined to care for the world and all those in it. But on a meta-level, this trend involves gaining favour with a higher power; efforts that are lost on us. I would say that creating utopia requires a full commitment; any distance from this object hampers the process. Losing sight of this one goal diminishes the chance of its success. Nevertheless, the question remains if religion has a place in the ideal world.

The correlate of this discussion is the relationship between utopia and science. Again, I referred briefly to this in my thesis, but a lengthy discussion of science is far beyond the scope of this essay. However, whilst we now take for granted the positive contributions of science to our world, including the development of technology (another interesting topic with regard to utopia), we should not disregard the potentially dystopian results.

Visions of genetic engineering and dystopia abound, as do visions of utopias. The creation of thermonuclear and other devices of mass destruction, may well conjure doomsday scenarios, yet these have also been credited with being crucial to a possible of world peace by way of deterrence. Problems of privacy, that arise with the development of technology and the digital world, raise questions about freedom, as governments and corporations struggle to maintain the status quo. By these modern problems alone we can see that advancement in science cannot be halted, at least not in a world of relative peace and prosperity.

With this I wonder about the potential of a world state, and indeed the necessity of a world state for utopia. Ideas about a decentralized government, politics, a classless society, population, economics and ideologies all remain unattended to in my thesis. Of these, one of the most interesting topics is that of population. From my preliminary work on the concept utopia I feel that population size is the key to many of the world's problems. One may argue with Malthus on what frankly are dangerous ideas, but one should also ask why they are dangerous, and why they are called for. In my opinion problems ranging from individual human health, our treatment of animals and the environment, to civil and international war, all benefit from an examination in terms of populations. This may well be the key to utopia, and simultaneously the most controversial concrete issue.

From these concrete issues we move to more abstract ones. Where the issues raised above are the subject of practical laws to utopia, the more abstract issues are often the subjects of what I have referred to in my thesis as the 'theoretical utopias'. In this, we find that there has not been mention of such issues as the relations of utopia to particular values, nor particular philosophies. For instance, is happiness the ultimate goal of man? Is this even achievable on a large scale, or should the most prominent values be those that support equality and be in terms of opportunity? But then how do we facilitate these opportunities, and are some not less fortunate by birth? How far does freedom extend? Should one be free to discriminate, or persecute?

Often this last problem is averted by preventing it from ever occurring, most often by means of some universal moral values of code. This of course leads us to consider the role of virtue in utopia. The idea that most problems, especially interpersonal problems, can be subverted by reliance on an ideally virtuous society is highly attractive. This idea is strongly related to the notion of enlightenment, a complex concept and arguably a panacea. In this thought experiment, most all of the world's social problems are alleviated when man is enlightened. Thus, the relationship between enlightenment and utopia is crucial. Of course all manner of issues arise with this supposition, not least the idea that one cannot truly begin to conceptualize enlightenment without being enlightened. Furthermore, there is moral enlightenment and intellectual enlightenment, or are they one and the same? Or, is enlightenment perfect rationality and what role does rationality play in utopia?

These questions and more concerning the abstract notions that relate to utopia only scrape the surface of what is involved in conceptualizing their relationship. I want to briefly note that thus

far the issues of population and enlightenment have sparked the greatest interest in me, I wish now to move on to two issues that I feel are likewise central to the process of reaching utopia.

The first relates to a notion that has been briefly discussed in my thesis: the idea of human nature. Although I was not in a position to discuss in depth the concept of human nature, it was made clear that whatever intuitive notion one may hold, it was important that it not be fixed. This fact is repeatedly emphasized by Bloch, and is likewise an important element is the work of Marx. I too support this notion. I wish to hold that it is human nature itself that must be moulded and shaped constantly. Improvement of the self is improvement of one's personal nature, be it toward kindness and altruism or improved rationality and decision making. On a larger scale, that of mankind itself, we are talking about the improvement of human nature. And it must remain malleable. It must remain possible to affect human nature. If this is not the case, if somehow human nature is fixed, efforts to change anything will seem ever more futile. A similar point has of course been argued in the context of human progress.

The point is that just as we condemn the man that refuses to learn, refuses to question his prejudices, we must condemn a society that is fixed in its dogmas, unwavering in its beliefs. We *have* seen in this thesis the idea that utopia cannot be fixed, that flux is crucial to its health and attainment. This notion extends to, and is supported by, the topic of human nature. From this springs the second issue that has sparked my interest: the possibilities of education.

Bloch introduces the inspiring notion of docta spes, educated hope. The idea that hope can transform the way we look at the world. In this sense, I feel that education is the abstract key to utopia. Where population is a physical notion of great importance, education is that which resolves to improve both intellect and the human capacity of virtue. Nothing can be more important than education. Education is lasting hope.

But even in an epilogue where I feel free to translate my feelings to word, I must restrain myself. What is clear is that the human condition, enlightenment, education and population are issues that still fill me with wonder. From these I wish to move to a final concept that I wish to mention; that of piecemeal engineering.

Of course, much has already been written on this idea, I wish only to say the following. The issue of creating a better world, of working toward utopia, is so unimaginably vast and infinitively complex that one can do nothing but take ones time to come to an informed opinion, let alone implement change. When this complexity meets the impatience of man, mistakes are often made. One need of course look only at the results of Marxism for an example of the haste by which man can operate politically. This may be a cliché example, but it nevertheless poignantly demonstrates the notion of mankind's impatience. This having been said, lasting change must be implemented slowly: in the manner of piecemeal engineering. Moreover, far from being enlightened, man will struggle to implement the correct change and thus a method of trial and error can be the only strategy to a better future. The danger of haste is premature rejection of ideals that may work only if implemented over a long period of time; again, as in the case of the ideals of equality that underline Marxism.

Finally, I wish to briefly mention a few issues that relate directly to my thesis. To start, I regret that I was not able to look more closely at dystopias: these being vital to a proper understanding of its correlate. Similarly, I wish I could have examined more closely anti-utopian theories. Sadly, there are many such theories, and I wish to look more closely at the arguments for rejecting what I feel is an inescapable 'fantasy', that of an ideal world. Of course, I have argued that in order to change the world for the better, one *must* have some conception of what this better world should be. Thus, it must be insightful to examine theories that wish to better the world without a utopian picture in mind.

Additionally, my introduction of the three axes by which to plot utopias has opened up an unexpected corridor of research for me. Thus, it may have been interesting to plot a set of utopias on the axes to see if any relationships arise, as I hypothesized. This of course is a more scientific approach to the subject, and I am glad to have set out on a philosophical approach first.

In conclusion, uncharacteristic of the militant optimism I subscribed to earlier, I wish to end on a sceptic note. Although I write on utopia convinced of its value, the question remains: is a conception of utopia really necessary for, or even conducive to, the betterment of our world? Although I have argued the affirmative, one may ask if in his impatience man is ready to respond to such an ideal in a manner befitting a piecemeal journey to its realisation. If this is not the case, then a picture of utopia may well be above all harmful. Of course, a true optimist knows where he stands.

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