Introduction

It is my goal in this paper to offer a strategy for translating universal statements about utopia into particular statements. This is accomplished by drawing out their implicit, temporally embedded, points of reference. Universal statements of the kind I find troublesome are those of the form 'Utopia is *x*', where '*x*' can be anything from 'the receding horizon' to 'the nation of the virtuous'. To such statements, I want to put the questions: 'Which utopias?'; 'In what sense?'; and 'When was that, is that, or will that be, the case for utopias?' Through an exploration of these lines of questioning, I arrive at three archetypes of utopian theorizing which serve to provide the answers: namely, utopian historicism, utopian presentism, and utopian futurism. The employment of these archetypes temporally grounds statements about utopia in the past, present, or future, and thus forces discussion of discrete particulars instead of abstract universals with no meaningful referents.

Given the vague manner in which the term 'utopia' is employed in discourse—whether academic or non-academic—confusion frequently, and rightly, ensues. There are various possible sources for this confusion, the first of which is the sheer volume and wide variety of socio-political schemes that have been regarded as utopian, by utopian theorists, historians, or authors of fiction. Bibliographers of utopian literature (such as Lyman Tower Sargent) face the onerous task of sorting out those visions of other worlds that belong in the utopian canon from those that do not. However, utopian bibliographies generally err on the side of inclusiveness, and a sufficient range and number of utopias remain in the realm of discourse to make the practice of distinguishing a utopia from a non-utopia (or even a dystopia) challenging at best and baffling at worst. For example, should Dante's *Paradiso* be considered a utopian work or not? There is no easy answer to this question, and thus there is plenty

of room for dispute on this subject between active or prospective utopian

bibliographers.

Another cause of imprecision and concern in utopian theory is definitional in

nature. Ruth Levitas has pointed out the fact that most dictionaries give two

competing definitions of 'utopia' that run something more or less like (1) '(a

representation of) the best imaginable socio-political state', and (2) 'a far-fetched or

impossible scheme for socio-political improvement'.[1] Thus in the minds of careless

language-users, the 'impossible' and the 'best imaginable' states are conflated, by

definition, in 'utopia'. The ultimate implication of this conflation is that utopia is

impossible because the ideal is unachievable.

Defining 'utopia' instead as an expression of desire for the betterment of

socio-political conditions, as Levitas does,[2] steers us clear of the basic definitional

conflation discussed above, but still leaves us with no expectations regarding either

the content, form, or function of utopian articulations. Levitas takes this open-

endedness to be a virtue of her account, as it serves to explain the wide variety of past

and extant utopias, as well as utopias to come.[3] However, her definition of utopia as

an expression of desire does little to resolve the problematic ambiguity of how

'utopia' as a term is generally employed in discourse, which does not typically accord

with her definition. I believe that the ambiguity that concerns us here turns on implicit

assumptions regarding the content, form, and function of utopias—in other words, the

speaker's views on the permissible scope of utopian visions, the manner in which

these can be acceptably communicated to others, and the observable power these

wield or lack in the socio-political sphere. Such premises will shift over time, of

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[1] Ruth Levitas, *The Concept of Utopia* (London: Phillip Allan, 1990), p. 3.
[2] Levitas observes that: "The essence of utopia seems to be desire—the desire for a different, better way of being." (Ibid., p. 181)
[3] Ibid, p. 8.

course; but the appropriate way to address these changes is to take note of the discrete

temporal frame each statement is meant to refer to, rather than appeal to a universal

and timeless human quality (such as desire) that accounts for diversity in the field but

gives little explanatory ground for perceived consistency within it.

<u>The Universal Voice in Utopian Theory</u>

Due at least in part to their desire to resolve the problematic ambiguity that

dogs utopian theory, theorists in the field of utopian studies frequently lapse into

making universal statements about what they consider to be the essential features of

utopias. For one theorist, utopias might be only those ideal societies that have as their

focus laws and institutions; for another theorist, utopias might be only those ideal

societies that focus on individual freedom and self-realization. Unfortunately, the

accumulation of opposing universal statements within the canon of utopian studies

gives the appearance that subjectivism is the dominant theoretical framework in the

field. J. C. Davis has commented on this seemingly muddled state of affairs in utopian

theory, and identified what he considers to be the main problem:

> The difficulty that we are labouring under at the moment is that the adjective 'utopian' is
> being used as a catch-all label for all forms of ideal society. Two problems can and do arise
> from this. The first is that contradictory statements are made about utopia by authors who are
> examining different forms of ideal society. Thus we may be told that utopianism is an
> expression of great optimism, or of profound pessimism; that utopia enables men to live
> naturally, or that it is designed to subdue and discipline human nature; that in utopia the state
> withers away, or that it becomes more complex and comprehensive, even that state and
> society become coincident; that utopia begins with ideal men, perfect human beings, or that it
> assumes that unrighteous and recalcitrant people will be its raw material…[4]

Subjectivism in utopian theory, and contradictory statements about utopia

arising from conceptual confusion, are the problems that Davis attempts to mitigate

via the introduction of five distinct types of ideal society—Cockaygne, Arcadia, the

Perfect Moral Commonwealth, the Millennium, and Utopia (see Table 1 below for a

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[4] J. C. Davis, *Utopia and the Ideal Society* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), pp. 17-8.

summary the relevant distinctions).[5] Utopia, for Davis, is simply that variety of ideal

society that takes man and nature as flawed; that possesses a perfected set of laws and

institutions that optimally respond to those flaws, such that progress from that state is

not possible (given that 'progress' from a state of perfection is more accurately

described as regression). Davis' definition of utopia is precision-cut, due to his

understanding that "…if there are rules to the game… the vaguer or more elastic one

makes one's operative definitions, the more carefully one has to justify exclusions."[6]

Table 1: Davis' Five Types of Ideal Society

Ideal Society	Nature	Institutions	Human Nature	Progress
Cockaygne	Surreally bounteous	Eliminated completely	Insatiable	Not possible
Arcadia	Consistent, not excessive	None, except family	Consistent, not excessive	Not possible
Perfect Moral Commonwealth	As is	Those agreed upon	Perfected	Institutional reform
Millennium	Dependant on deity	Incidental	Fundamentally flawed	Dependant on deity
Utopia	As is	Perfected	As is	Not possible

By breaking up the broad and undifferentiated concept of utopia into five

subtypes of ideal society, of which utopia properly defined reappears as only one of

the subtypes, Davis has simply narrowed the scope for potential contradiction, but not

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[5] J. C. Davis, "The History of Utopia: the Chronology of Nowhere", in *Utopias*, Peter Alexander and Roger Gill, eds. (London: Gerald Duckworth and Co. Ltd., 1984), pp. 8-10.
[6] Ibid., p. 6.

completely eliminated it. Theorists are still free to make temporally ungrounded universal statements about utopia under Davis' schema, i.e. 'Utopia is a nursery for tyrants' (read: for now and forever). It is just that the number of candidate utopias referred to by this type of universal statement is fewer, and thus the chance of the universal statement having a plausible but contradictory theoretical competitor is significantly lessened.

What is ultimately lacking from Davis' analysis, however, is a convention for reducing or eliminating the application of universal statements that evoke the concept of 'utopia' in a deceivingly atemporal manner. 'Utopia' in the general sense really refers to nothing in particular; not even a quality shared by all the discrete utopias that together make up its frame of reference. To make a Wittgensteinian point: we cannot expect more precision from the generic concept 'utopia' than the generic concept 'game'—though there are meaningful generalizations that can be made within the scope of a *particular* game, such as 'in the game of chess, all chess pieces start off in a set arrangement on the chessboard'. There are no corresponding universals (metalanguage) to capture the generic 'game' concept; not even 'all games are leisure activities' (because, as it happens, some games are played professionally). To quote Wittgenstein: "…the concept 'game' is a concept with blurred edges."[7] Thus there is no individual cord that runs the entire length of the conceptual rope; nothing we can grip onto that is essential to 'games', any more than there is anything we can speak of that is essentially 'utopian'.

What can be done to address this obstacle to conceptual clarity is to reform our linguistic practice. We can limit our scope of reference to particulars, eschewing any 'metautopia'-type universal statements in our discourses. I suggest that employing a

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[7] Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations*, G. E. M. Anscombe, trans. (Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall, 1958), § 71.

temporal frame of reference when making statements about utopia is a possible solution to this quandary. If one can determine what era, or exact moment in time (if this is possible), a theorist is implicitly referencing in their statements, then more often than not a seemingly universal statement about utopias can be broken down into particular statements about this or that utopian vision, social movement, or publication.

This methodological recommendation is not meant to detract from Davis' classificatory schema: his distinctions and his analyses are in fact most helpful. I am not offering a competing theory, but rather a supplementary tool for theoretical disambiguation. Whereas Davis focuses on certain salient features of various visions of ideal societies—such as their relation to nature, their approach to social institutions, their implicit assumptions about human nature, their attitudes toward perfection, and the means (if any) they employ to bring about progress—my approach, on the other hand, targets the universal statement itself as the culprit of conceptual confusion. Decoding a universal statement about utopia into a particular statement, via identifying its implicit temporal frame of reference, narrows the scope of the statement until the author can be understood, in all probability, to mean only one thing. This dramatically aids us in evaluating apparently universal statements about utopias, and checking their consistency with other statements made on the subject. Now it falls to me to say more about such universal statements and their implicit, temporally particular, frames of reference.

Decoding Universals into Temporal Particulars

David Plath's dramatic first line from his book *Aware of Utopia* is a statement that implicitly utilizes the universal form. Provocatively, he proclaims that: "Utopia is

a bore."[8] Plath's statement does not express any clear fact of the matter; 'utopias are

boring' is meaningful only insofar as 'unicorns are charming' is—which is to say, it is

a statement that lacks the usual criteria we might employ in verifying its truth or

falsity. We might interpret Plath to be here passing judgment on the worth of utopian

schemes *tout court*. Cases could be made for or against such a judgment, but what

evidence would our arguments rest upon? We cannot access the testimony of utopians

either actual or fictional without first determining Plath's temporal frame of

reference—his scope, as stated, is too broad to effectively attack or defend. We need

to analyze whether Plath's statement refers to the utopias of the past, present, or

future, and this in turn will reveal further underlying assumptions that he is making

about that specific set of utopias.

Initially, we might reword Plath's universal statement as "All utopias are

boring" or "Life in any utopia would be boring." At the first level of objection, we

should note that reasonable disagreement is possible. I could say that "Utopia is

exciting" (or "All utopias are exciting" or "Life in any utopia would be exciting"),

and this seems at least as plausible as Plath's statement. Without reference to

particular cases, there is no way to break this deadlock between the two conflicting

universal statements. It seems that in order to make any headway, we have to infer an

intended temporal target for Plath, which we can attempt by decoding it within the

greater context of his article, or using other background information at our disposal.

Although this is usually not a serious problem with most authors, a great deal of

interpretive legwork will nevertheless be required to properly contextualize the

statement, and in that process opportunities for misunderstanding will necessarily

present themselves. Eventually, we may surmise that Plath is commenting on the

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[8] David Plath, "Foreword", in *Aware of Utopia*, David Plath ed. (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1971), p. ix.

socio-political stagnancy of ancient depictions of perfectionist utopias; or perhaps we may take him to be claiming that the utopian writers of a certain era generally made poor novelists: at a certain point we, as readers, will have to choose one of these paths for our take on Plath.

Even if we can agree on one of these interpretations of Plath, and make sense of his statement within the context of his own work, we may still have difficulty evaluating his point when it is contrasted with the work of other utopian theorists. For example, we may read in George Kateb that: "…the form of a modern utopia need not bear much resemblance to any of the utopias devised in the past by idealist or perfectionist thinkers."[9] Given this broader context, it becomes more important for us to be able to decisively determine which kind of utopias—modern or ancient—Plath regards as 'boring'. If we interpret Plath as referring, even partially, to modern utopias, we need to formulate for him his most likely response to H. G. Wells' assurance that "the Modern Utopia must be not static but kinetic, must shape not as a permanent state but as a hopeful stage, leading to a long ascent of stages."[10] If we take the statement 'utopia is boring' to refer to modern utopias, then defenders of Plath will need to come up with an answer to the question 'How can a kinetic utopia consisting of an ascent of stages be boring?'

In light of these objections, we might charitably interpret Plath's statement such that it reads: "The utopias of *antiquity* are a bore." But that is still too broad. Many utopias, even ancient ones, remain distinct enough from political reality to capture the popular imagination; Plato's work, most notably, remains fresh and vital material to modern readers. Let us, then, refashion Plath's statement so that it is even more particular: "I, David Plath, presently believe that the utopias of antiquity,

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[9] George Kateb, *Utopia and Its Enemies* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), p. 15.
[10] H. G. Wells, *A Modern Utopia* (London: W. Collins Sons and Co. Ltd., 1926), p. 4.

especially utopias *x*, *y*, and *z*, would have been boring to live in, for reasons *i*, *ii*, and

iii." Though such statements of opinion have but a weak role to play in utopian

theorizing, we are still in a better position than had we rested with the initial statement

'utopia is a bore'.

Here I must remind my readers that my central concern is the great potential

for misunderstanding and vacuity that unnecessarily universal statements generate;

and that I chose Plath's opening line not as the worst offender in this regard, but

simply as a token of a problematic universal statement. To be fair, it must be admitted

that 'utopia' is a paradoxical concept at the best of times, even when analyzed within

a clearly delimited scope (as in Davis' schema). By 'paradoxical' I mean, for instance,

that we are routinely asked by critics—in the tradition of Karl Popper—to accept that

humankind's best efforts to produce a state wherein perpetual peace could attain

would inevitably result in the bloodiest of conflicts. This is precisely the kind of sharp

ironic contrast that dominates much of utopian theory, and which tends to leave

students of utopia conceptually confused: How can attempts to create the best form of

socio-political organization result in some of the worst? Of course as we look back on

the events of the twentieth century with a cringe, we may feel inclined to concede

that, indeed, the violence required to bring about a utopia of peace creates only a

surface paradox, caused by the lack of similitude between peaceful utopian ends and

aggressive utopian means. However, we must remember that the twentieth century is

just one era amongst many; and that it may not have always been, and it may not

always be, necessarily the case that striving for perfection causes widespread

suffering.

There are other contested sites within utopian theory, wherein paradoxes arise

that are seemingly insoluble, or at least more deeply problematic: wherein we have

two antinomic universal statements, both intelligible, and both of which are part of the canon of utopian theory: i.e., 'Utopia is necessarily authoritarian', and 'Utopia is necessarily individualistic'. Of course, it is acceptable if two theorists happen to disagree on some theoretical point or another—this is typically the manner in which academic disciplines make progress. However, it just so happens that utopian theory is dominated by such disagreements, to the point that the idea of a coherent body of utopian theory seems to be a hopeless proposition unless we are willing to abandon the law of the excluded middle. From Paul Turner's introduction to his translation of Thomas More's *Utopia*, I take the following Walt Whitman quote:

> Do I contradict myself?
> Very well then… I contradict myself;
> I am large… I contain multitudes.[11]

It is my position that we cannot afford to be quite so beatific about contradictions in the canon of utopian theory. Whereas from a literary standpoint, it is not crippling to have contradictions spring up within a given utopia, or between two or more utopias, from a theoretical standpoint consistency is a highly desirable quality.

Temporal Particulars: the Three Archetypes

To iterate: What I am objecting to is the proliferation of unwarranted universal statements about the essential features of utopias, which serves to confuse the real issues at stake in discourse about utopia. But how can we make ourselves theoretically clear? Below, I argue that by employing three theoretical archetypes that operate specifically in terms of temporal particulars rather than universals, we end up with fewer antinomic premises and conclusions in the body of utopian theory. The three archetypes I propose are (1) utopian historicism, which asks the questions: 'What was

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[11] Walt Whitman, quoted by Paul Turner, in Thomas More, *Utopia*, Paul Turner trans. (London: Penguin Books, 1988), p. 12.

the form of presentation used for utopias in the past?', 'What was the substantial content of past utopias?', and 'What socio-political function did utopian visions have in the past?'; (2) utopian presentism, which asks the questions: 'What is the form of presentation used for utopias in the present?', 'What is the substantial content of current utopias?', and 'What socio-political function do utopian visions presently fulfil?'; and (3) utopian futurism, which asks the questions: 'What will the form of presentation for utopias likely be in the future?', 'What will the substantial content of future utopias likely be?', and 'What socio-political function will utopian visions likely have in the future?'[12] Contra Levitas, the form, content, and function of utopias are taken as central in this schema—though they are here divided in a novel manner according to their implicit or explicit temporal frames of reference.

These three theoretical archetypes—utopian historicism, presentism, and futurism—provide us with tools for analyzing and evaluating statements about utopian theory. When they are ignored, however, utopian theory as a whole can appear to be a mass of paradoxical or antinomic statements. For example, we may hear that 'utopia is aspatial and atemporal', and also that 'utopia is a spatiotemporal concept'; and that while it is often maintained that 'utopia is unrealisable by definition', it is also heard that 'progress is the realisation of utopias'. By employing the three theoretical archetypes outlined above, I will show that many of these puzzles and seeming inconsistencies within utopian theory can be fruitfully resolved.

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[12] It is important to briefly note that the words 'historicism', 'presentism', and 'futurism', are being used in a novel way here, in that they are divorced from their usual contexts of use. The term 'historicism', for instance, is culled from its philosophical context in which history is considered to be reality's sole defining consideration. Similarly, I separate 'presentism' from the metaphysical doctrine that what exists in the present is all that exists. For the purposes of this paper, I shall commit myself to nothing so extreme—my utopian historicism and presentism simply demarcate, respectively, that the past or the present is the chosen temporal frame of reference for a particular statement about utopia. Futurism, likewise, is severed from its most famous context as an abstract modern art movement that aligned itself with Mussolini's fascism. Utopian futurism, as I here construe it, is solely concerned with the form, content, and function of eventual manifestations or visions of utopia.

Allow me to demonstrate a possible application for these archetypes, via the juxtaposition of some sample quotes, below (see Tables 2.0, 2.1, and 2.2). Despite their obvious differences, what links these quotations is that they all employ a certain voice: a universal, or overly general tone, which I believe leads to conceptual confusion. Each of these generalizations can be broken down into temporal particulars and made more intelligible. Of course, it is hard to part with the universal voice: grand, sweeping aphorisms take better hold of the human imagination than the recitation of dry facts; and utopian theorists—to indulge in a relatively benign generalization of my own—no doubt often want to express themselves in a memorable fashion. But I contend that we must try to reign in the universal voice so that antinomies of the kind exhibited below arise less frequently in the discourse of utopian theory:

Table 2.0: Shklar vs. Wilde

Judith Shklar:	Oscar Wilde:
"Utopia is nowhere, not only geographically, but historically as well. It exists neither in the past or in the future. Indeed, its esthetic and intellectual tension arises precisely from the melancholy contrast between what is and what will be."[13]	"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."[14]

Above we appear to have two competing metaphysical claims: Judith Shklar holds that utopia doesn't exist anytime or anywhere, while Oscar Wilde holds that history is a series of spatio-temporally concrete manifestations of utopia. Though these passages contradict each other, both of the claims seem to have some sense to them, and we seemingly have little cause to favor one over the other. It is by noting

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[13] Judith Shklar, *Political Thought and Political Thinkers* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press), p. 164.
[14] Oscar Wilde, "The Soul of Man Under Socialism", in *Complete Works of Oscar Wilde*, J. B. Foreman, ed. (London: Collins, 1973), p. 1089.

the presentist voice employed by Shklar as she describes what motivates utopian

longing in the here and now, disavowing any concerns with the past and future, that

we see she is concerned with the function of utopia in producing socio-political

tension in the present. And by noting the historicist voice used by Wilde as he

describes the function utopias of the past have played in motivating socio-political

development, we can begin to see that Wilde and Shklar are each just stating their

conflicting loci of interests rather than contesting each other's metaphysical doctrines.

Table 2.1: Golffings vs. Dahrendorf

Francis and Barbara Golffing:	Ralf Dahrendorf:
"Each generation entertains its own image of the future, and that image is eminently historic. Even as the world has not stood still since Campanella, or Bacon, or William Morris wrote, so neither has that counterworld—no-world, no-place (*Utopos*)—stood still which forms its inevitable complement….The office of any Utopia is to *orient* mankind: that is to say, turn men's faces toward the sun. But the only sun that matters, as every true utopist knows, is the rising sun."[15]	"[U]topias have but a nebulous past and no future; they are suddenly there, and there to stay, suspended in mid-time…It is hard to link, by rational argument or empirical analysis, the wide river of history—flowing more rapidly at some points, more slowly at others, but always moving—and the tranquil village pond of utopia."[16]

The contradiction in the case above is a more subtle point about the function

of utopia: Francis and Barbara Golffing seem to be claiming that the role of utopia is

to orient humanity to the future, while Ralf Dahrendorf holds that there is really no

temporal link by which humankind *could* orient itself to a utopian future, as utopia

exists only outside of time, in 'mid-time'. Again, on the surface both claims seem

plausible, and there seems to be no way to break the deadlock between them. But

looking more closely, we can see that, contrary to appearances, the Golffings are

really presentists—they care primarily about the function of utopian orientation in the

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[15] Francis and Barbara Golffing, "An Essay on Utopian Possibility", in *Utopia*, George Kateb ed. (New York: Atherton Press, 1971), p. 39.

[16] Ralf Dahrendorf, "Out of Utopia: Toward a Reorientation of Sociological Analysis", in *Utopia*, George Kateb ed. (New York: Atherton Press, 1971), p. 104.

present, rather than speculating about the function of future utopias, whatever those

might happen to be. Dahrendorf, on the other hand, can be read as a historicist, albeit

a frustrated one, as he finds difficulty in connecting visions of utopia to concrete

historical events (it should be noted here that many other utopian historicists do not

make this complaint). Failing to recognize the socio-political function of past utopias

does not preclude such functions from obtaining with present utopias; having a

'nebulous past and no future' is no conceptual obstacle to existing as an influence in

the present. Once again, the apparent antinomy between our utopian theorists has been

diffused, by identifying the implicit temporal frame of reference employed by each.

Table 2.2: Walsh vs. Kateb

Chad Walsh:	**George Kateb:**
"…utopia is not very bacchanalian. Life is real and earnest; one must do his appointed task. Too much individualistic self-expression, sexually or otherwise, may elicit frowns or worse. There is, however, adequate opportunity for socially-approved channels of self-expression, such as begetting and conceiving eugenic children, inventing useful procedures, and composing odes to strengthen the social solidarity of the utopians."[17]	"There are rationalist utopias, hedonist utopias, ascetic-spiritual utopias, paradisal utopias, agrarian utopias, mechanized utopias, utopias of virtue, or craft, or play. More summarily, utopian theorists have ranged themselves on both sides in their answers to these basic questions: Shall utopia be a place of abundance or austerity? Shall utopian politics be aristocratic or democratic? Is work or leisure the right mode of existence? Is the good life one in which public involvements or private pursuits absorb the main energies of the individual?"[18]

Here, Chad Walsh seems to be arguing for some stipulations on the content of

utopia, namely that utopias must be those visions of an ideal society that exhibit

chastity and industriousness. These stipulations disregard the fact that the Marquis de

Sade's *Philosophie dans le Boudoir* is often considered to describe a utopia of sorts;

as is, less problematically, Henry Neville's *Island of Pines*; and in both of these works

sexual promiscuity and self-indulgence feature heavily. George Kateb, on the other

hand, accepts the *de facto* plurality of utopias in the present, and proceeds to

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[17] Chad Walsh, *From Utopia to Nightmare* (London: Geoffrey Bles. Ltd., 1962), p. 59.
[18] George Kateb, *Utopia and Its Enemies* (New York: Schocken Books, 1976), p. 5.

catalogue some of the many types of utopian vision he has encountered previously, among which are counted some that can be described as hedonistic. We can diffuse the apparent tension between these two utopian theorists by noting that Walsh is employing a wholly presentist voice, and dealing with the issue of utopian content in a partially normative, rather than wholly descriptive, manner; while Kateb is chiefly utilizing a historicist voice to discuss a wider scope of past utopias, and describing their contents in a purely descriptive way. Perhaps Walsh, in refraining from employing the universal voice, might have been more specific about the time in which these chaste utopias he is discussing dominated the utopian landscape; at which point, we could question his claim to their upright characters with more precision.

Conclusion

While I am confident that the three archetypes I propose for the clarification of utopian theorizing could easily be applied to deflating a broader set of seeming antinomies, I am aware that they are neither exhaustive nor as ideally exact as could be hoped for. One could, with a finer-toothed theoretical comb, tease out mixed archetypes, or invent new archetypes altogether unconsidered here. The universal voice, so derided by myself, might even be employed to collect statements one considers to neatly capture the necessary and timeless features of utopia. Of course I would discourage the application of this latter theoretical filter, as I believe that this is where utopian theory goes wrong… when we imagine that there is a Platonic form of Utopia somewhere in the heavens that exemplifies all the necessary features of utopias, and then hold up each instance of utopia for the purpose of comparison with that ideal form. I argue that the theoretical situation, as it stands, looks rather more like Wittgenstein's family resemblance story—just as there is very little that is essential to the concept 'game', there is very little that is essential about the concept

of 'utopia'. And just as we can say that *some* games involve throwing dice, but not

all, so too must we avoid making similar sweeping statements about utopias, and thus

overstepping our epistemic bounds.

> It is as if someone were to say: "A game consists in moving objects about on a surface according to certain rules…"—and we replied: You seem to be thinking of board games, but there are others. You can make your definition correct by expressly restricting it to those games.
>
> - Ludwig Wittgenstein, *Philosophical Investigations,§3*

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