Reconciling theories of educational utopia: A proposal for a two-tiered theory for change

Roxanne Desforges

A Thesis
in
The Department
of
Education

Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Master of Arts (Educational Studies) at
Concordia University
Montreal, Québec, Canada

August 2012

CONCORDIA UNIVERSITY
School of Graduate Studies

This is to certify that the thesis prepared

By: Roxanne Desforges

Entitled: Reconciling theories of educational utopia: A case for an ambitious strategy for change

and submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts (Educational Studies)

complies with the regulations of the University and meets the accepted standards with respect to originality and quality.

Signed by the final Examining Committee:

_____ Chair

_____ Examiner
Prof. Paul Bouchard

_____ Examiner
Prof. Arpi Hamalian

_____ Supervisor
Prof. David Waddington

Approved by

_____
Dr. Richard Schmid
Chair of Department

_____2012 _____
Dean of Faculty

ABSTRACT

Reconciling theories of educational utopia: A case for an ambitious strategy for change

Roxanne Desforges

As the traditional concept of utopia consists of a blueprint for an ideal society, the conversation surrounding the question of utopianism in education has long been focused on theorizing educational change. Utopianism, however, has been widely criticized by those who find its concept problematic and its method practically ineffective. Without a utopia in sight, philosophers of education and policy-makers have been forced to consider other avenues of educational reform. The education community now questions whether there remains a place for utopian theorizing in education.

This thesis argues that there is indeed a place and moreover, a need, for utopianism in education. Increasingly, new conceptions of utopia are being offered to distance the notion from its objectionable aspects and salvage its aim of positive social change. Yet the question remains: what conceptions of utopianism might enable this transformation?

Iconoclastic utopianism, a less stringent and more exploratory strategy, has been heralded as a solution to the criticisms of blueprint utopianism. However, I question the ability of iconoclastic utopianism to deliver the change utopianism is meant to bring about. I claim that by asserting universal ideals alongside the open-ended iconoclastic utopianism, a two-tiered strategy consisting of a layer of universal ideals, with an overlay of iconoclastic utopianism can better provoke real social and educational change. I consider the ideals of Martha Nussbaum's Capabilities Approach as an example of the kind of strong ideals that can bring about educational change. Ultimately, I ask that further inquiry be pointed in the direction of a two-tiered approach to educational utopia.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my sincerest gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. David Waddington, for his sound advice, his brutally honest commentary and for taking the time to engage in many a thought-provoking discussion with me.

I would also like to thank my committee members. Throughout my degree, Dr. Paul Bouchard has reminded me of the importance of creating critical scholarship and Professor Arpi Hamalian has offered an envaluable amount of support, proving that some people really do have all the answers.

Fianlly, to my mom, Mona Melkonian, whose unconditional love and support never fails to see me through, to my sisters, Kimberly Desforges and Aynsley Horner, who manage to keep me grounded, and to my sito, Jaqueline Charles, whose strength and principle guide me, thank you.

Table of contents

Introduction

While education remains a recognized driving force for social progress, there are increasing doubts as to whether it has the power to truly transform society. This doubt reflects a strain of pessimism that is prevalent in our contemporary world. Hope for social progress kept the belief in the transformative potential of education alive. Alas, in our late-capitalist society, neoliberal values have hijacked the meaning of hope. As Henry Giroux (2001) has observed, the rhetoric of hope has been distorted to refer to free-market aspirations and is more often spoken of in terms of individual success rather than the achievement of collective goods for society. In this dystopian universe, Giroux (2003) attests, it has become more realistic to believe that the world will come to an end than that capitalism will. Russell Jacoby (1999, 2007) concurs that we live in an age that mistakes pessimism for realism. The utopian belief that people can change their society for the better is now equated with youthful naiveté and "utopianism" carries primarily a pejorative connotation. Our conventional wisdom justifies this pessimism by corroborating that "human suffering and massive inequalities in all areas of life are simply inherent in human nature and an irreversible part of the social condition" (Giroux, 2006, p.52). These doubts, this perverted notion of hope, this cultural pessimism, are all functions of the anti-utopian attitude that characterizes our time.

Given this overall pessimism, it comes as no surprise that there is plenty of concern for education. The critical chain that prompted the decline of utopianism also led to pessimism and finally, to apathy and disengagement—the crux of the problem (Bloch, 1986; Halpin, 2003; Jacoby, 2007; Levitas, 2010a). There is no shortage of teachers who

despair about the present and the future of education. While current reforms may lead to piecemeal improvements, they do not attempt to challenge the reigning cultural pessimism, effectively shortchanging the role of education for society. It is in light of this crisis of hope that the need for idealism, for social dreaming, is being raised anew. This need has translated into a desire to rescue utopian studies from the margins of research.

In this essay, I argue that this need for new hope can be met by reinjecting the utopian spirit into today's educational community. I argue that there is a potential for utopianism in education that remains largely unexplored. Broadly, the aim of this thesis is to reframe and vindicate the long debated role of utopianism in educational theory and practice, contributing to the resuscitation of the idealism dormant in educational thought. By re-establishing optimism as a respectable and defensible social mood, perhaps the anti-utopian attitude may cease to impede hopeful and progressive educational thinking.

It was not so long ago that hopes and dreams for social change were treated as serious prospects worthy of intellectual consideration. Education once burgeoned with grand, ideal visions for society. Early philosophies of education presupposed that education could bring about positive social change. Educational philosophies were motivated by a social purpose and their aim was often an ideal—a vision of how the future ought to be. These visions were mapped out as plans for an ideal society—what we now call utopian blueprints. A utopian blueprint depicts a design that, if adopted wholesale, will, in practice, deliver the idealized society.[1] Plato and Jean-Jacques Rousseau are two enduring influential figures in education that contributed utopian

1 When I use the term "utopianism" I am referring to the umbrella category of utopian thought, which encompasses a variety of disciplinary theory, literary satire, and imagination.

blueprints, which combined social and educational hope for the future.

Blueprint utopianism was a popular strategy of philosophers of education until the dramatic failure of one particular manifestation of utopian thinking. Soviet communism tarnished the word and its meaning for many inside and outside educational circles. A flood of criticism condemning utopianism followed. Dissenters began to interpret the concept of utopia to be problematic, its method practically ineffective and its end unattainable.

As utopian theories of educational change fell out of favor, philosophers of education and policy-makers alike were forced to consider other avenues of educational reform—avenues that might solve the real problems of students and teachers. Between the dwindling appeal of utopian theorizing and the unremitting need for change, an ameliorative strategy, whereby isolated bits of regulation and policy are unsystematically amended over time, has grown in popularity. Educational "tinkering" has become the go-to strategy for reform, leaving the education community to question whether there remains a place for the kind of idealism that utopian theories presuppose.

This thesis argues that there is indeed a place and moreover, a need, for utopianism in education. Furthermore, as will become apparent, I do not stand alone in defense of utopianism. Increasingly, socially concerned thinkers are offering new conceptions of utopia in an effort to distance the notion from its objectionable aspects and salvage its aim of positive social change; not to mention recover its concomitant optimism. Yet the question remains: what conceptions of utopianism might enable this transformation?

I will first engage with an alternative to blueprint utopianism, iconoclastic utopianism. There are two instances of iconoclastic utopianism that I believe are worth the attention of educational theorists and practitioners. The first is theorized by David Halpin, as a socially integrated approach to utopia. Halpin (1999) formulated 'utopian realism' as a conceptual solution to the rampant cynicism and defeatism that continues to bog down advocates of educational and social change. The second is theorized by Henry Giroux. Giroux (2001) articulates the concept of 'educated hope', designed with the specific intention of preventing education from being swallowed whole by the values of neoliberalism. These contemporary theories of iconoclastic utopianism allow for a new way of understanding the potential of utopianism for society. Iconoclastic utopianism, as a conceptual tool and a creative process, carries with it new possibilities for educational application. I undertake to explore one such possibility in the theory of adult educator Budd Hall, who has demanded that new directions for utopia be investigated. Hall adopts an iconoclastic strategy in conjunction with adult learning practices to pursue a new utopia.

While iconoclastic theories of utopianism prove to create helpful opportunities for social change, they also have limitations. These limitations are especially obvious when compared to the blueprint strategy they were meant to replace. I will, therefore, argue that iconoclastic utopianism is an insufficient substitute for blueprint utopianism. The primary reason for the iconoclastic strategy's disappointment is that it lacks the transformative force of the blueprint, which is made possible by its appeal to universal ideals, a principle the iconoclasts have purposely omitted.

In order to reconcile the need for social change with the need for an open and malleable utopian strategy, I suggest that the educational community begin to consider a two-tiered utopian theory. The theory that I recommend combines a foundation of universal ideals with an overlay of the iconoclastic potential for further utopian exploration. As an example of which universal ideals we may consider adopting in education, I point to Martha Nussbaum's (1999) central capabilities. Ultimately, my hope is to attract members of the educational community to further inquire about and explore the potential of a two-tiered strategy for theorizing educational utopia.

In formulating this call for utopianism in education, I will offer an account of the rise, the fall and the contemporary renaissance of utopian thinking in education. Chapter 1 provides a historical overview of the relationship between utopianism and education. It highlights the prominent role blueprint utopianism has played in two of the most influential philosophies of education, namely that of Plato (1987) and Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1993). Chapter 2 recounts how utopian thinking fell out of favor among educational theorists by outlining three of the most noteworthy criticisms of blueprints. Subsequently, this chapter responds to these objections by fleshing out an alternative theory of utopianism: iconoclastic utopianism. Finally, Chapter 3 offers an account of iconoclastic utopianism for educational practise. I also discuss some of the limitations of iconoclastic utopianism and offer considerations for future directions for utopianism in education.

Chapter 1: Education's utopian roots

Hopes and desires for social change have long been expressed in utopian writings. These writings have significantly impacted human life by raising questions, promoting critique and inspiring real change in the world. One aspect of human life that has received considerable attention from utopian writers is that of education. Likewise, some of the greatest contributions utopian thinking has made to society are represented in the history of educational thought.

The history of educational philosophy is deeply grounded in utopian thinking. The utopian element in an educational philosophy is the assertion that education is, above all, an ideal-driven means for social change. Though not all educational philosophies are utopian, many of the pioneering works that remain influential to this day were. Among the most notable utopian philosophies of education are those belonging to Plato and Jean-Jacques Rousseau. Both Plato and Rousseau theorized utopian blueprints for education.

Imagining a utopian blueprint involves a three-step cognitive process. First, one critiques and diagnoses the current state of reality. Second, in light of the diagnosis, one must posit an ideal reality. Having identified shortcomings and ideals, the third and final step is to map out a route from the present to the future ideal social order. Formulating a utopian blueprint involves articulating, with precision, the third and final step: creating a recipe for achieving the envisioned ideal state. A utopian educational philosophy is therefore characterized by a critique of the status quo, an ideal-driven hope for the future, and a plan for making the ideal vision a reality.

In keeping with tradition, I will recount Plato and Rousseau's educational

philosophies according to the blueprint structure: first, I will explain how they were dissatisfied with the social order to which they belonged and their criticisms of it; second, I will sketch how, in spite of their realities, they envisioned an ideal world and they believed, not only in an ideal philosophy of education, but also that education itself would be a crucial factor in establishing and maintaining an ideal social order; lastly, I will outline the disjunct between their reality and the ideal that motivated them to construct a blueprint for a perfect social order.

Lastly, a word on the limitations of this chapter. In the spirit of their utopian intentions, I will paint charitable pictures of these philosophies. This is not to say that I fail to acknowledge their ethically problematic elements, which are primarily symptomatic of their historically situated worldviews or that I endorse these views. However valid these objections may be, they remain outside the purview of the task at hand in Chapter 1, which is chiefly expository. It's also important to note that no one utopian philosophy is the subject of this thesis, rather it is the very structure of utopian thinking and its unexplored potential for education that is the guiding interest.

Plato's Utopia (424/423 B.C.E. - 348/347 B.C.E)

Historical context

The events that lead up to Plato's the *Republic* mark the end of a golden age in ancient Athens; a troubled time, as evidenced by a drawn-out war, political unrest and what is known as philosophy's first and greatest tragedy, the execution of Socrates. Plato was born shortly after the beginning of the Peloponnesian war in approximately 429

B.C.E (Nagle, 2002, p.176). Athens, the once strongest city-state and birthplace of Plato, was greatly devastated by its struggle and eventual defeat by Sparta.

The social disintegration that would follow created hopeless conditions for Athenian life. When Athens surrendered in 404 B.C.E, the Spartans replaced the Athenian democracy with the oligarchy of the The Thirty and during this time, Athens remained in a state of civil war (Nagle, 2002, p.150). It wasn't long before the oligarchy earned the epithet of "tyrants" from the Athenian people for significantly reducing the rights they had enjoyed under their former democracy. The Thirty Tyrants allowed only the wealthy to vote and participate in legal proceedings, whereas under Athenian democracy these rights were upheld for all citizens (Nagle, 2002, p.150). They also undertook to rid Athens of its most influential members; they exiled approximately 5000 democrats, executed 1500, and imprisoned a countless number (Nagle, 2002, p.151). Though this repressive regime lasted less than a year, Athens had been successfully purged of many of its democratic leaders.

Against great odds, democracy was reinstated in Athens in 403 B.C.E. Though it appeared a more politically virtuous model of government, many were skeptical of this democracy for which strength and sophistry appeared to be its ruling principles. Socrates was one such dissident and his skeptical stance motivated the state to indict him. In 399 B.C.E., Socrates was tried for impiety and corrupting the youth of Athens (Nagle, 2002, p.176). As one of Athens' most influential figures, Socrates chose to end his life rather than flee the home he loved and the home that had condemned him.

Criticisms and Ideals

Plato was born shortly after the beginning of the Peloponnesian war in approximately 429 B.C.E and witnessed the horrific events that befell Athens (Nagle, 2002, p.176). The utopian tradition rises out of the very elements of Athenian life that challenged Plato to imagine a better state. Plato's desire for social change stems from (at least) three aspects of life during his time: wartime instability, the injustice of the democratic regime, and the popularity of sophism. I will briefly discuss each unsavory aspect of Athenian life in turn and the outline the ideals Plato affirms, which contrast sharply with the historical context.

The epoch that produced the *Republic* was by no means short of social and political tribulations. Having grown up in wartime Athens, Plato witnessed his city-state in constant strife through the Peloponnesian war to the civil war during the tyranny of The Thirty. During this time, Athenians lived in constant fear of attack; farmers abandoned their homes in the more vulnerable countryside and sought refuge in the central city of Attica (Nagle, 2002, p.147). Athenians watched as their homes went up in flames when the Spartans invaded rural Attica over the course of the twenty-seven year war (Nagle, 2002, p. 147). Though sheltered within the city walls, Attica became immensely over-crowded. Living conditions were dismal as the city depended on the navy to deliver food into the city and a horrific plague fell upon Athens killing an unprecedented number of people (Nagle, 2002, p.147). The ancient historian Thucydides describes Athenian life during the year of Plato's birth as such:

An aggravation of the existing calamity was the influx from the country into the

> city, and this was especially felt by the new arrivals. As there were no houses to receive them, they had to be lodged at the hot season of the year in stifling cabins, where the mortality raged without restraint. The bodies of dying men lay one upon another, and half-dead creatures reeled about the streets and gathered round all the fountains in their longing for water. The sacred places also in which they had quartered themselves were full of corpses of persons that had died there, just as they were; for as the disaster passed all bounds, men, not knowing what was to become of them, became utterly careless of everything, whether sacred or profane. (Thucydides, 1943, p. 100-101)

The circumstances in Athens were further aggravated by the insecure political climate. Losing the war to Sparta culminated in the relinquishing of the democratic city-state. The political shift to an oligarchical regime disheartened the already weak and defeated Athenians (Fisher, 1963, p.19). As an upper class and politically engaged citizen related to two members of The Thirty who tormented his city, Plato was deeply affected by these events and openly critical of them as well (Nagle, 2002, p. 178). The impact of civil turmoil on Plato cannot be understated.

It took but a year for the rule of the Thirty Tyrants to be overthrown in 403 BCE. The reinstated democratic government was, however, hell bent on ridding Athens of any traces of the Spartan regime. This determination created a democracy of mob-rule, resulting in the conviction and the death of Socrates. Plato (1987) was devastated by the treatment of Socrates under the rule of democracy and characterized it in the *Republic*, years later, as a “regime of injustice”. This section of the *Republic* also contains a

detailed account of democracy's shortcomings and is a testament to how deeply aggrieved Plato remained over the loss of Socrates. Describing democracy through the voice of his teacher, Plato (1987) denounces its excessively egalitarian quality, arguing that the average citizen is not equipped to rule and can not deliver justice to the state:

> In the end they capture the seat of government, having discovered that the young man's mind is devoid of sound knowledge and practices, the most effective safeguards the mind of man can be blessed with...the vacant citadel in the young man's mind is filled instead by an invasion of pretentious fallacies and opinions. (560b-c)

Ruling, according to the *Republic*, requires natural abilities and wisdom, a rare quality found in the few who have undergone many years of schooling and philosophising. Simply allowing anyone to rule by virtue of their citizenship is what led to the execution of Socrates and what Plato (1987) argued would bring democracy to degenerate into a Tyrannical society.

Plato also took issue with the dominant educational and epistemological trends of his time. Isocrates, a notable sophist, founded a school in Athens a few years prior to Plato's Academy, which had gained considerable popularity (Nagle, 2002, p.178). For sophists, education was a matter of successful argumentation and therefore, truth was not absolute but treated as a function of rhetoric. What was true or right, according to the sophists, was whatever one could be convinced of. This education, therefore, specialized in rhetoric, expression, persuasion and coherent argumentation. Education for these students was a purely practical and political endeavor and was offered by the Sophists on

a for-profit basis. Isocrates believed his model created better statesmen than Plato's, and the population seemed to agree—sophistry would in fact remain the dominant educational model in ancient Greece (Nagle, 2002, p.178).

In the face of these hardships, Plato sought to overcome the socio-political instability of his time by idealizing the principle of Justice, which serves as the guiding principle of his utopian vision. Justice, for Plato, is good in itself (not just for what it produces) and can characterize both individuals and communities. He explains that a just individual is one with a just soul. Justice in the soul prevails when the soul's three parts —reason, spirit and appetite—are in harmony. This occurs when reason manages to govern spirit and appetite, resulting in a harmonious soul and a happy person (Melchert, p.148-149).

Justice in the soul is correlated to justice in the community. For Plato, the community consists of members with distinct natural functions. He outlines three classes of citizens: the laborers correspond to the appetitive part of the soul, the auxiliaries correspond to spirited part of the soul and the governing members accord with reason. For Plato, this last group is the only class that can pursue wisdom (knowledge of what is true) and it is wisdom above all that Plato believes should be used to rule society. Therefore, a just city is one where members of society fulfill a role according to their nature (Plato, 1987, 433a). In other words, the laborers labor, the auxiliaries police, and the guardians govern, and no class interferes with the other. Such a society, Plato believed, would run harmoniously, with members actualizing their potential. Justice of the city is this ordered state.

Plato also explains that the ideal state would prize its philosophers rather than execute them—the philosophers were to be the governing class, delivering justice to the state and establishing social harmony. Without the philosopher-king, Plato believed that democracy would beget tyranny:

> The society we have described can never grow into a reality or see the light of day, and there will be no end to the troubles of the state, or indeed, my dear Glaucon, of humanity itself, till philosophers become kings in this world, or till those we now call kings and rulers really and truly become philosophers, and political power and philosophy thus come into the same hands, while the many natures now content to follow either to the exclusion of the other are forcibly debarred from doing so. This is what I have hesitated to say for so long, knowing what a paradox it would sound; for it is not easy to see that there is no other road to real happiness, either for society or for the individual. (473d-e)

Plato founded his school, the Academy, in opposition to the dominant educational tradition of sophism. The Academy featured an educational system that pursued Truth above all. Plato developed the Theory of Forms as a kind of solution to the epistemological conflicts that plagued Athenians. For Plato, the Forms are abstract ideas that are the essences of things in the world (e.g. the Form of the Good is the ultimate source of all goodness in the world). By instantiating a theory of Forms, which were the sources of truth and reality, Plato thought it would be possible for disagreements among citizens to be resolved through objective knowledge of what is absolutely and universally true (Fisher, 1963). In addition, if rulers possessed absolute Truth (i.e. knowledge of the

eternal forms), Plato believed they could ensure a just city-state.

The Blueprint

Plato wrote *The Republic* in approximately 375 B.C.E as a Socratic dialogue, a work of fiction that addresses the very real problems Athenians were facing. On Plato's map to utopia, his ideals of Justice, the societal role of the philosopher, and absolute Truth mark the spot. In order to arrive there, Plato's blueprint asserts that three bold political proposals must be met—first, that women should be equal members of the the ruling guardian class of citizens; and second, that the family should be abolished so that every citizen may be a brother or a sister to one another, and third, that political power should belong to philosophers (Plato, 1987, 453c, 457d, 473d). This final proposal is made according to the aforementioned principle that each member of the city must play the role that best suits his or her nature in order for the polis to run harmoniously. An individual can fulfill this role only if they have both the adequate potential and if they are educated on Plato's terms to become a knowledgeable and well-rounded citizen. Education is thus the vehicle for satisfying the third proposal of Plato's blueprint and is therefore essential to the establishment of his utopia.

The philosopher is a lover of wisdom, one with the eternal knowledge of the Forms, which is to say that the philosopher understands reality as it truly is. With this knowledge, philosophers are best suited to rule the ideal state, as Socrates indicates when he poses the following rhetorical question:

Can you, then, possibly find fault with an occupation for the proper pursuit of

> which a man must combine in his nature good memory, readiness to learn, breadth of vision and grace, and be a friend of truth, justice, courage, and self-control?...grant, then, education and maturity to round them off, and aren't they the only people to whom you would entrust your state? (Plato, 1987, 487a).

The blueprint for Plato's ideal state consists mainly of the delineating the necessary path to becoming a philosopher-ruler—he or she who will deliver justice. This path begins with being born into the guardian class and the rest consists of a very specific education. The aim of education, for Plato, is to produce good citizens and above all, philosopher-kings.

Plato places the responsibility of education in the hands of the state. Education is the state's first obligation if it is to ensure justice. Every citizen of the *Republic* was to receive an education. By educating all children, the state can see to it that individuals select appropriate career paths and that those with leadership potential are trained accordingly (Fisher, 1963, p.33).

Education, for Plato, is a means of shaping the minds, bodies and characters of the citizens of the state. Both physical and intellectual training impact character development and both are required in order to form a balanced character; as Socrates observes, "excessive emphasis on athletics produces an excessively uncivilized type, while a purely literary training leaves men indecently soft" (Plato, 1987, 410d). Additionally, Plato's pedagogical method, for which he is famous, does not ask the educator to "put into the mind knowledge that wasn't there before" but rather, the role of the educator is to direct individuals to think and know things for themselves (Plato, 1987, 518c). For this reason,

the Socratic Method of educational facilitation is a key ingredient in ensuring proper philosophical development.

There are three significant discussions of education present in the *Republic*. In Part III, the compulsory education of all citizens is discussed. Only those with potential were to receive the additional and voluntary schooling necessary to become a philosopher-ruler, and the specifics of this education are discussed in Part VIII. A metaphorical account of education is also offered in "The Allegory of the Cave", presented in Part VII. This allegory depicts the transformative experience of education for the guardian. Before closing my account of Plato's blueprint, I will recount the necessary curriculum that makes up the educational journey of a philosopher-ruler as well as the broader, metaphorical journey depicted in the allegory.

Three levels of schooling make up Plato's ideal educational system. The intellectual content of each level goes as follows: The level equivalent to our primary school teaches reading and writing. The level equivalent to our secondary school teaches literary education through poetry and music. History, religion, citizenship, cultural studies and moral education were all taught through the same literary texts.[2] Finally, at the Academy, students direct their attention toward mathematics, science, and philosophy, which Plato refers to as "dialectic" or a method of dialogue involving

2 Plato believed that many popular texts, in their attempts to enthrall the reader, sacrificed the truth regarding the gods and morality and were therefore, unsuitable for youth. Plato believed the depictions of the gods in the works of Homer and Hesiod to be a harmful influence on the youth of Athens:

> Nor can we permit stories of wars and plots and battles among gods; they are quite untrue, and if we want our prospective guardians to believe that quarrelsomeness is one of the worst evils, we must certainly not let them be told the story of the Battle of the Giants...On the contrary, if we are to persuade them that no citizen has ever quarrelled with any other, because it is sinful, our old men and women must first tell children stories with this end in view..." (1987, p.132-33). Plato believed that stories participate in shaping the character of a child. Even if the intention of a story is allegorical they were to be omitted from educational use because young people could not yet detect such literary nuance (Plato, p.133).

antagonistic questioning from which truths reveal themselves organically.

The education of the philosopher-king is designed to test the philosophical nature of the individual. The objective of this education is to develop the ultimate virtue, knowledge of the Form of the Good (Plato, 1987, 505a). The study of mathematics plays a crucial initial role in this endeavor because the solution of an equation is not a subject up for debate; it is absolute knowledge. Mathematics does not admit of opinion, which is a lower form of knowledge according to Plato (1987, p.310, refer to diagram). Mathematics also allows the student to harness their abstract reasoning skills that are required for understanding the Form of the Good or any form at all, as universality is itself an abstract notion.

Unlike the Sophists, Plato did not glorify the training of rhetoric, for he believed that one could not be successfully trained in it without abusing it. In fact, prior to learning how to convince anyone of anything, one must understand how society functions. The philosopher-king's education is intended to teach a true love of learning. Dialectics, a true philosophical act, is reasoning through dialogue that consists of an exchange of questions and answers, much like we find in Plato's dialogues. This process allows one to develop one's knowledge of the world and the self. This educational phase goes on until the guardian is over thirty years old (Plato,1987, 537d). At this point, they can hold political office and gain experience while continuing to test themselves. It is only by age 50 that those outstanding philosophers can begin to also rule the republic (Plato, 1987, 540b). In ruling, they are tasked with engaging citizens as Socrates did in the polis, to guide them towards Truth and towards the Good:

> And when they are fifty, those who have come through all our practical and intellectual tests with distinction must be brought to their final trial, and made to lift their mind's eye to look at the source of the light, and see the good itself, which they can take as a pattern for ordering their own life as well as that of society and the individual. For the rest of their lives they will spend the bulk of their time in philosophy, but when their turn comes they will, in rotation, turn to the weary business of politics, and for the sake of society, do their duty as Rulers, not for the honour they get by it but as a matter of necessity. (Plato, 1987, 540b, p.354)[3]

This educational path, from childhood to rulership, is imparted metaphorically in the Allegory of the Cave, which summarizes Plato's core thoughts on the educational process. In this famous passage of the *Republic*, Socrates offers an analogy between the education of a potential philosopher-king to that of a prisoner of a cave:

> Imprisoned in a cave, a group of people have been chained down, forced to spend their lives immobile. At a distance behind them, a fire blazes. In between the men and the fire lies a passageway, along which people carry figures of men, animals and other objects raised above their heads. The light of the fire projects these figures onto the only wall the prisoners can gaze upon Unaware that the shadows are mere images, the prisoners believe that these projections are the real things (Plato, 1987, 514a-515c).

Socrates supposes now that a prisoner is compelled to turn around, away from the

3 It is interesting to note that it seems that for Plato the act of teaching/facilitating and the act of ruling are almost the same.

shadows. When the prisoner is liberated, he sees the fire and the figures but nonetheless still holds the shadows to be more real. Reaching the surface and stepping out in to nature, the prisoner becomes skeptical of his previous reality. Finally, gazing upon the sun, the prisoner eventually realizes that the sun "produces the changing seasons and years and controls everything in the visible world, and is in a sense responsible for everything that he and his fellow-prisoners used to see" (Plato, 1987, 516b-c). The prisoner then becomes aware of the fact that he was not experiencing the the world as it truly is, all along.

Socrates says that the people in the cave are like members of the polis. They see images but they think they are seeing reality. Ordinary people treat the visible world as the prisoners treat the images— they unhesitatingly trust the reports they receive from their senses. Education, in this account, is turning around from the images and facing something else. Plato (1987) wants to convey that turning around requires a certain force, a prisoner must be "compelled" to do so (515c). It is by no means easy to accomplish this. Education, similarly, involves coming to terms with the fact that what one assumes to be true is not always the case.

The sun is analogous to the Good in this story. Just as the prisoner reaches the sun, the student becomes the philosopher reaching the Good. For Plato, education is a transformative experience; it requires work and involves pain. The discomfort at work here is the kind that is made manifest through the Socratic method. The Socratic method makes one uncomfortable with conventional thinking. It demands that one think for one's self through what appear to be simple questions. The realization that one does not have

knowledge can be agonizing and not everyone is capable of overcoming this stage of the educational process. The ability to do so is the mark of a philosopher. In other words, education enables the transformation from being an individual for whom reality is the second-rate visible realm, into being an individual of knowledge, for whom reality is the intelligible realm of mathematics and the forms.

Turning back to the question of the purpose of this blueprint, the social order Plato believes can be achieved by educating the citizenry in the *Republic* is specifically designed to meet the challenges he lived through. This philosophy would become the mission statement of the Academy. Through the Academy, Plato hoped to implement the ideals outlined in the *Republic*.

Before Plato, state institutions had seldom been the object of written criticism and reform. In fact, the notion that a more perfect reality can be theorized and pursued, a distinctly utopian notion, may be, in part, a result of Plato's critical method (Fisher, 1963, p.20). For this reason, Plato is one of the wellsprings of the utopian tradition. The *Republic* can aptly be called the first utopian educational treatise, laying the groundwork for future philosophers, such as Rousseau, to continue the tradition.

Plato's philosophy certainly served as a benchmark for Rousseau. In Book 1 of *Emile*, Rousseau (1993) praises the *Republic* as, "*le plus beau traité d'éducation qu'on ait jamais fait*" (p.6). Rousseau, like Plato, theorizes education in tandem with a vision of politics that substantiates the notion that the underlying purpose of education is to shape society.

Jean-Jacques Rousseau's Utopia (1712-1778)

Historical Context

Born in Geneva, Switzerland in 1712, Jean-Jacques Rousseau grew up as the Age of Enlightenment was blossoming in Europe. The Enlightenment worldview was characterized by a turn away from faith-based explanations and an emphasis on empiricism and reason for forming understandings. Favoring empiricism meant adopting the practices of natural science to investigate the world. Favoring reason meant turning to critical and rational thinking to answer questions about the world, while adopting a more conservative view of the limits of our human understanding. These inclinations converged in the wake of the scientific revolution to inspire the most definitive Enlightenment concept, the scientific method. The scientific method could explain the world in ways that sacred texts could not, and indeed often explained the world better than scripture. The laws of both human society and nature became humanity's to uncover, which led to the birth of social science. The emergence of science went hand in hand with the Enlightenment's obsession with the notion of progress—the idea that society could be improved through an understanding of the laws that govern human life and that furthermore, society and its institutions could be redesigned with this knowledge. It was believed that better societies and better people would result from intellectual progress (McKay, et. al., 2003, p. 667). Universal solutions to man's problems were the aim of both science and philosophy. With this in mind, it is clear that the utopian projects were closely in harmony with the overall Enlightenment project. Not surprisingly, the Enlightenment period was the high water mark for blueprint utopianism.

While Enlightenment intellectual history is impressive even by today's standards, many aspects of Enlightenment social life leave much to be desired, family life being one such aspect. Regardless of social class, during the eighteenth century many children were of very little consequence to their parents. In fact, the French moralist Vandermonde was recorded to have said, "one blushes to think of loving one's children" (Lorence, 1974, p.1). The absence of feeling and care for children is thought to be a result of the high child mortality rate of the time (McKay et. al., 2003, p. 668). Medical care for children was still such that one in five newborns was sure to die (McKay et. al., 2003, p. 666). Doctors and members of the clergy would urge parents not to become emotionally invested in their children (McKay et. al., 2003, p.668). This neglect and emotional detachment often also led to child abuse. Attention came from parents more often for the sake of discipline than affection (McKay, et. al. 2003, p. 668). This sentiment is expressed in the writing of Susannah Wesley who argued that the duty of the parent is to "conquer the will [of the child], and bring them to an obedient temper" (Greven, 1973, p.47-48). That is, the underlying belief about children was that only through control could they become good. This is a reflection of the Christian notion that human beings are by nature wicked; Thomas Hobbes, in his *Leviathan* (1951) added that man requires structure, governing authority, and civilization to be good. In sum, child-rearing in the eighteenth century involved an attitude of indifference, and physical discipline.

During Rousseau's time, formal education was also becoming more common in Europe. This was in large part due to the rise of religious toleration as literacy became a tactic of religious competition. Churches of all denominations began to involve

themselves with the education of the people, and both the Catholic and Protestant traditions encouraged people to learn to read using their own scripture (McKay et. al., 2003, p. 670). Popular education was basically the outcome of churches' attempts to instruct the faithful in sound doctrine. The presence of dissident sects (Jansenists and Protestants in France; Presbyterians and Quakers, in England) made competition for hearts and minds an uncomfortable fact for national churches. Nonetheless, many children would never learn to read.

Criticisms and Ideals

Historically, Rousseau is thought of as a principal figure of the Enlightenment because he contributed several of his period's most resounding philosophical works, among them *Discourse on the Origin of Inequality Among Men, The Social Contract* and *Emile*. Yet interestingly, Rousseau was also one of the Enlightenment's greatest critics as he was utterly disenchanted with its reigning principles. Three principles with which he took great issue were the Enlightenment's dominant theory of human nature, the dominant governing structure of society and the adherence to reason above all other sources of justification. In targeting these ideas, Rousseau addressed his criticisms to the philosophers who held them, which is to say that Rousseau's collegial friendships were often short lived (Kenny, 2006, 94-95).[4] Despite the strong opposition with which his criticisms and ideals were met, Rousseau's work provoked the ideological shift toward Romanticism.

---

4 Among them were Diderot, Hume and Voltaire.

Though competing theories of human nature existed during the Enlightenment, Rousseau believed Thomas Hobbes' position, which had remained relevant for over a century after his death, to be the most offensive. The Hobbesian legacy asserted that life without government would consist of all out war and as the famous passage goes, in the state of nature:

> there is no place for industry; because the fruit therefore is uncertain; and consequently no culture of the earth; no navigation, nor use of the commodities that may be imported by sea; no commodious building; no instruments of moving, and removing, such things as require much force; no knowledge of the face of the earth; no account of time; no arts; no letters; no society; and which is worst of all, continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man, solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short. (Hobbes, 1986, p. 84)

Hobbes (1986) paints a dark picture of the natural state of mankind which he justifies by identifying three principles which would be cause for quarrel among men: competition, diffidence and glory. Without government, there is no justice and no law (Hobbes, 1986). There is however, a law of nature, a force in every human being to preserve through his or her own life—the "law of the jungle", as it is often put. Without a social contract in place to create rational incentive for people to abstain from violence, an anarchic state prevails.

While Hobbes and Rousseau both agreed that European civilization was marred by greed and vanity, they disagreed as to why that was. Hobbes believed that these sentiments are innate; Rousseau, however, argued that human beings are not essentially

vain and greedy but that these dispositions are the product of unjust social institutions. Furthermore, Rousseau (2011) believed that society corrupted the naturally good human nature (p.32). Rousseau, therefore, idealized the state of nature that preserved the moral character of man and assigned to education the role of protecting the individual from all that might taint its perfection.

Rousseau also condemned the popular belief that enlightened absolutism or enlightened despotism, as it is sometimes called, was the ideal political model for social and legal reform (Israel, 2011, p. 270). Voltaire is one proponent of the Enlightenment who subscribed to the theory that good and progressive governance would result from an enlightened monarchy under the advisement of an enlightened court. He believed that political reforms should be imposed by well-educated and knowledgeable rulers, such as Catherine the Great, whom Voltaire endlessly praised in his correspondence with her (Israel, 2011, p. 271). Voltaire, and many other Enlightenment thinkers (Turgot, Hume, Alembert, Goethe) believed enlightened despotism to be the only viable solution to the old self-interested despotism:

> many believed such rulers embodying the principles of law, justice, toleration, and the responsibilities of the state had already virtually banished the old unthinking despotism and intolerance holding ‘sous le joug d’une servitude absolue nos ancêtres’ as one moderate enlightener expressed it and that ‘la philosophie’ had thereby gained impressive ground. (Israel, 2011, p. 273)

Voltaire, however, was not desperate for fundamental political, social or legal reform (Israel 2011, p.275). Having had the good fortune of every of life’s comforts, it is no

surprise that Voltaire did not see eye to eye with Rousseau, who was far less wealthy than Voltaire.

Rousseau vehemently disagreed with the blatant authoritarianism of monarchy, let alone absolutism. Believing freedom to be one of humanity's most important rights, Rousseau held that the only way to protect it was to put sovereignty in the hands of the people—the central aim of the Social Contract (Fisher, 1963, p.128). Rousseau idealized egalitarianism and believed that it was the people who needed to be enlightened so that their general will could rightly govern. For Rousseau, education would serve to ensure the kind of moral citizens that could function in the model of government he foresaw.

Lastly, Rousseau also attacked the enlightenment's most quintessential convictions: its faith in reason, moderation and progress. Rousseau believed that these forces destroyed rather than liberated the individual (McKay et. al., 2003 p.612). As I have already explained, Rousseau believed human being to be fundamentally good in nature; however, he also observed that "men are wicked; a sad and constant experience makes proof unnecessary" (1997, p.197). In 1751, Rousseau wrote the essay that would earn him his counter-Enlightenment reputation namely, "Discourses on the Arts and Sciences". Therein, Rousseau argues that the progress of the arts[5] and sciences negatively impacts human beings, their virtue, their morality and their happiness. Four years later, Rousseau wrote *Discourse on the origin and foundation of inequality among men*, which also espoused the theme that humanity had been corrupted by societal institutions.[6] In

5
What is meant by "arts" here is something more along the lines of crafts than fine arts. "Arts and Sciences" is meant to encompass all aspects of intellectual culture.

6
To demonstrate the extent of Rousseau and Voltaire's antagonism, when Rousseau sent Voltaire a copy of

sum, one thesis that can be extracted from these works is that life has not improved or progressed with its cultural advances but rather, these advances have suppressed the natural goodness of man. Humanity's goodness is debased in part because virtue takes a backseat to wealth accumulation in civilization—Rousseau writes, "what will become of virtue when when one has to get rich at all costs? The ancient politicians forever spoke of of morals and virtues; ours speak only of commerce and money" (Rousseau, 1997, p.18). The desire for money motivates the cultivation of reason and wit over the virtues of honesty, frugality, and courage. This is reflected in the rewards attributed to the former in society and in education. "From our very first years," Rousseau writes,

> a senseless education adorns our mind and corrupts our judgment. Everywhere I see huge establishments, in which young people are brought up at great expense to learn everything except their duties. Your children will not know their own language, but will speak others that are nowhere in use...they will not know the meaning of the words magnanimity, equity, temperance, humanity, courage... (Rousseau, 1997, p.22)

It is important to note that Rousseau is not anti-intellectual by any means, as it is not the arts and sciences in and of themselves that he disparages but what he believes are their direct causal outcomes. Later, Rousseau would argue similarly about the role of reason, insofar as reason trumps emotion and makes people disinterested in virtue. Socialization, Rousseau argues, teaches us to manage our emotions, our most instinctive thoughts and feelings further distancing man from his nature.

Discourse, Voltaire wrote him back taunting, "I have received your book against the human race" (Kenny, 2006, p.94).

Rousseau sought to correct man's corrupted nature by protecting the basic good of the child from the refinements of civilization. Rousseau's solution is to turn away from civilization, authoritarianism and reason and turns toward nature, egalitarianism, freedom and virtue. The latter ideals are put to work in *Emile*. Subsequently, *Emile* and the ideals contained therein would greatly influence the Romantic movement that rebelled and overturned the Enlightenment in the eighteenth century.

The Blueprint

Rousseau follows in the Platonic tradition of formulating utopian theories of society wherein the role of education figures prominently. In the *Social Contract*, Rousseau articulates his grand ideal theory of society. However, it is his other philosophical treatise, *Emile: Or on Education*, which he wrote simultaneously, in which Rousseau offers his blueprint for education. There is also, certainly, a correlation between the educational blueprint in *Emile* and the societal blueprint in *Social Contract*. The education delineated in *Emile* culminates in the student reading the *Social Contract*, conveying to the reader the primacy of the educational blueprint to the overall political project.

Emile is the theoretical account of a regular boy's ideal education from birth to adulthood, the aim of which is to protect the naturally good nature of the young by allowing them to develop on their own accord. For Rousseau (1993), a man's education is what shapes him: "all that we lack at birth, all that we need when we come to man's estate, is the gift of education" (p.6). Emile's education spans Books I through V, in

chronological order of developmental stage.[7] Each stage depicts his mental and physiological growth by highlighting a new aspect of Emile's capabilities. This growth is determined by the forces of "nature, men, and things", according to Rousseau (1993, p.6). By nature, Rousseau means the natural growth the student undergoes physiologically and psychologically. From others ("men"), humans learn what to do with their growing bodies and faculties and what is learned through experience with the environment is learned through one's interaction with things (1993, p.6). "Nature", is the guiding force to which the other two must cede (1993, p.6). The role of the tutor is to ensure that they do not conflict with one another. The company the child keeps, as well as the things the child comes into contact with, need to be moderated, but mainly education consists in letting nature take its course. In doing so, education amounts to the cultivation of the child's natural goodness by avoiding civilisation and its byproducts, at least until one is prepared to interact with them without falling prey. Therefore, the first step to a Rousseauvian education is to raise children in the country (1993, p.26). After all, for Rousseau (1993) ideal education is both in nature and according to nature; the outcome of which will be a man that is good for himself and for others (p.9).

The child's development takes place in four stages: 1) from birth to age two, 2) from age two to twelve, 3) age twelve to fifteen, and 4) from fifteen to twenty years old. Rousseau elaborated a set of developmentally appropriate prescriptions for each stage. According to Rousseau (1993), "man's education being at birth; before he can speak or understand he is learning" and so, Stage I begins at birth (p.29). There are two important

7
Book V also treats the education of Sophy, Emile's female counterpart.

guidelines for this stage. The first is to prevent the adoption of habits. At this point, the child is limited to affective thoughts and is aware of only pleasure and pain (Rousseau, 1993). Recurring experiences cause the child to develop habits, and habits create desires in the child above their natural needs (Rousseau, 1993). Rousseau (1993) notes, "the only habit the child should be allowed to contract is that of having no habits" (p.30). The second guideline is to ensure the child's freedom of movement. Stage I, then, asks the tutor not to shelter the child from danger or discomfort; coddling the child is prohibited. This way a sense of fear is never introduced to the child and punishments only result naturally from wrong acts. The main objective of the first stage is, in essence, "to give children more real liberty and less power, to let them do more for themselves and demand less of others" (Rousseau, 1993, p.35).

At stage II, the child is given a "negative education," which, for Rousseau, meant for the least amount of parental intervention possible. Rousseau believed that allowing the child to explore his external world unmediated by constant parental interference would most benefit the child at this developmental stage. In Rousseau's view, early education allows the child to get to know their bodies and to learn to use their senses. The teacher can however shelter the child from societal institutions—at this point, "what must be done is to prevent anything from being done" (Rousseau, 1993, p. 41). In allowing Emile his freedom, the teacher helps him learn through his own experience. For example, the teacher should let the child get hurt so that he can become "acquainted" with his body (Rousseau, 1993, p.41). "Pain" Rousseau (1993) maintains, "is his first and most useful lesson" (p.41). Rousseau postulates this kind of negative education in response to the

dominant model of education of his time, which emphasized rote learning and which, he believed, also taught children to reason prematurely. The principle of reason being in intellectual fashion, the reigning educational maxim was Locke's "reason with children" (Rousseau, 1993, p. 53). Addressing this trend, Rousseau (1993) remarks:

> Those children who have been constantly reasoned with strike me as exceedingly silly. Of all man's faculties, reason, which is, so to speak, compounded of all the rest, is the last and the choicest growth, and it is this you would use for the child's early training. To make a man reasonable is the coping stone of good education, and yet you profess to train a child through his reason! You begin at the wrong end, you make the end the means. (p. 53)

Rousseau believed that the child's capacities develop at their own natural rate and interfering with the developmental process is part of what was wrong with the dominant educational paradigm of the Enlightenment.

At age 12, Stage III marks the beginning of "positive education," or, in other words, that the educator is free to intervene in accordance with Rousseau's guidance. At this point, the student, now twelve years of age, is developmentally ready to be concerned with intellectual and vocational education. He is ready to work according to the natural course of development for now, more than ever, his physical strength is greater than his needs (Rousseau, 1993, p.128). He is also ready for intellectual nourishment, for he now capable of sustained attention. It is up to the tutor to determine what knowledge is true and what skills are useful to impart to the adolescent, while focusing on those subjects and tasks to which the child is most naturally attracted (Rousseau, 1993, p.130).

Stage IV is focused on learning social and moral lessons and rules of conduct. In introducing the child to society Rousseau acknowledges the conflict that arises from the fact that the natural child is individualistic and is not compelled to put the welfare of his fellow man before his own. This is what Rousseau takes to be the basic problem of citizenship:

> Anyone who dares to institute a people must feel capable of, so to speak, changing human nature; of transforming each individual who by himself is a perfectly solitary whole into part of a larger whole from which the individual would as it were received his life and his being. (1997, p. 69)

It is not in one's human nature to act as a citizen. Therefore, one can either have one's nature broken to become a citizen or one can salvage their good human nature, but Rousseau had reservations as to whether one could be both a good man and a good citizen. "Forced to combat nature or the social institutions, one must choose between making a man or a citizen, for one cannot make both at the same time" (Rousseau, 1993, p. 39). Rousseau goes on to say that anyone that should try to be both in the current society will fail:

> he who in civil order wants to preserve the primacy of the sentiments of nature does not know what he wants. Always in contradiction with himself, always floating between inclinations and his duties, he will never be either man or citizen. (Rousseau, 1993, p.40)

Yet while Rousseau believed that man should aspire to his natural state, he also acknowledged that man's rightful place was now society (Fisher, p.128). Therefore,

while Rousseau denigrated society for having unmade the goodness of man and encourages an education that interferes as little as possible with the natural course of human development, he also acknowledges the inevitability of society. In light of this inevitability, education must ensure that the individual can function as a citizen. Though it would appear that Rousseau's education is only interested in raising a man of nature and not a citizen, there is much evidence that Rousseau believed that those who were educated as he delineates in *Emile* could find a balance. For example, in Book V, Rousseau describes how Emile can become a good citizen and is given a copy of the *Social Contract*. In fact, Emile's education is meant to make him virtuous and knowledgeable, two traits which are required, according to the *Social Contract*, for intelligent and participatory citizenship. Therefore, Rousseau strikes a compromise between his desire to protect the naturally good human nature and his desire to ensure the morality of citizens.

For Rousseau, an individual could simply become a good man and a good citizen so long as he or she naturally develops as such. Rousseau (1993) begins *Emile* by asking, "how will a man live with others if he is educated for himself alone?" (p.9). Rousseau answers, "if the twofold aims could be resolved into one by removing the man's self-contradictions, one great obstacle to his happiness would be gone" (Rousseau, 1993, p.9). Rousseau's pedagogical treatise is guided by his attempt to train this "exceptional man" that can be both naturally good and morally good. In doing so, Rousseau lays the necessary foundation for his social contract, as it is this naturally good and moral citizen that can actively participate in the society Rousseau envisions.

With two utopian works to his name Rousseau can undoubtedly be canonized alongside Plato as a utopian philosopher of education. Rousseau wanted to transform education and in doing so, he hoped to further the aims of his grand social agenda. In this way, Rousseau continues the utopian tradition put into motion by Plato centuries ago.

Plato and Rousseau

It is no coincidence that Plato and Rousseau, two marked names in educational philosophy, also happen to be utopian theorists. In reviewing these philosophies of education, it becomes clear that there is a substantial connection between education and a desire for social reform. Plato and Rousseau found it impossible to separate educational theorizing from theorizing about an ideal state and vice versa. Historically, attempts at utopia reflect this relation as does the fact that a good theory of education is often characterized as one that reaches beyond the bounds of the present situation.

Although Plato and Rousseau both saw fit to wax utopian about their concerns for society and placed a great deal of emphasis on education for citizenship, the ideals that motivated their utopias diverged. For Plato, education is a communal activity wherein the citizen has a duty to fulfill the role which will contribute to a prosperous and just polis. Socialization and stratification are at the heart of Plato's utopian philosophy of education. For Plato, average citizens were not fit to govern. Some were born with the potential to rule and others would never provide input on the social order of the polis.

Rousseau, on the other hand, is patently opposed to non-egalitarian ideals. Equality for Rousseau is paramount to establishing an ideal society, a principle that

Plato's conception of justice did not call for. Furthermore, *Emile* is the educational journey of one boy—the individual is the central concern for Rousseau. A utopian education, in Rousseau's terms, is a process of self-actualization, and this individual growth takes place in virtue of the absence of societal intervention. Plato and Rousseau advocated quite different views on the individual and society.

The combination of the futuristic orientation, the assertion of ultimate values, and the comprehensive and detailed design are the key features of the utopian blueprint. While the structure of blueprints demands the evocation of universal values, it does not delimit which values can be decreed ideal, as is made plain by the distinction between Plato and Rousseau's selected values. In Chapter 2, we'll see how some conceive of this as a highly problematic element of blueprint utopianism. Until then, it must be noted that the requirement that values be unequivocally affirmed in the case of a blueprint is held by many to be its most attractive feature. Darren Webb (2009), makes the claim that utopianism's strength lies in its vision and that the contemporary "reluctance to offer 'closed' and 'totalising' blueprints...has debilitating consequences. For without substantive, normative representation, Utopia is unable to perform the functions ascribed to it" (p.744). Firm and unforgiving idealism is, after all, what most distinguishes utopian blueprints from ameliorative reform. The question then arises: can a theory be utopian without the component of idealism?

The conceptual and methodological influence of utopianism on education is unmistakable. The very notions of design, reform, and social change, which remain common interests in the field of education, are of utopian origin. However, the utopian

model of educational change has, for the most part, been abandoned for non ideal-driven, ameliorative strategies. Nevertheless, imagining utopia remains a significant element within the history of theorizing for educational change and though perhaps the belief in the transformative power of education has wavered, it has not been completely extinguished from social consciousness.

Some blueprints were written to be taken quite seriously and followed to the letter, whereas others are interpreted as idealistic thought experiments. As the debate about where Plato and Rousseau's intentions fit into this scheme rages on, so does the tradition of discussing education within the context of a design for a better society. Education's interest in utopianism has however diminished since the Enlightenment. Nonetheless, the utopian notion that education and social change are significantly linked as the respective means and the ends of the same equation is still strong. This suggests that until people give up on transforming society altogether, there will always be a shred of educational utopianism to hold onto.

Chapter 2: Objections to Blueprint Utopianism and Iconoclastic Utopianism

Following a centuries long conceptual partnership between utopian and educational thought, utopianism fell into disrepute and neither the disciplines of education, literature nor political science would be caught fraternizing with it. Without the utopian spirit in education, the aim of radically transforming society has been traded in for the more modest aim of reform. Several cues led to this anti-utopian turn in education. In this chapter, I will explain the twentieth century's disenchantment with utopianism. I will do this by outlining strong objections raised against the traditional blueprint model of utopia which led to the decline of utopian theorizing *tout court*. These objections also double as, what Oliver Bennett (2001) has called "narratives of decline" or explanations for the (simultaneous) decline of optimism.

Though the anti-utopian fervor had been building since the First World War, more substantial opposition to blueprint utopianism took shape in the mid-1940's, emphasized by the dawn of the Cold War. Specifically, three major objections converge to form the case against utopianism. Firstly, blueprint utopianism is viewed as a major political risk based on the fear that utopian blueprints encourage the formation of totalitarian states (Arendt, 1951; Berlin, 1997; Hayek, 1989; Popper, 1945). This view would come to be known as the liberal analysis of utopianism. Secondly, those concerned with educational policy and reform, most notably Tyack and Cuban (1996), emphasized the practical ineffectiveness and ultimate infeasibility of utopian blueprints. Lastly, postmodernists assert that traditional utopian principles are incompatible with the

egalitarian values of a pluralist society (Halpin, 2003; Levitas, 2010a; Sargisson, 1996).

While these arguments continue to problematize many thinkers' utopian urges, there are some who remain compelled by elements of utopianism. In the latter portion of this chapter, I will relate the formulations of utopianism that I believe address and circumvent many of the practical and theoretical obstacles raised in the first half. Iconoclastic utopianism is the contemporary conception of utopianism that I invoke here to counter the belief that education is better off without the influence of utopian thinking and to re-instill a sense of optimism in the education community: teachers, researchers and theorists. Two theorists who have articulated versions of iconoclastic utopianism are David Halpin and Henry Giroux. Though Halpin and Giroux offer distinct approaches, both recognize the necessity of utopian thought as an imaginative precondition for change. This acknowledgment fuels their desire to assert a utopian realism in our anti-utopian age.

Objections to Blueprint Utopianism[8]

The liberal analysis

From its Platonic inception, the intellectual fashion of utopianism thrived in education to the end of the nineteenth century, at which point the enthusiasm for utopianism ebbed. By the twentieth century, despite repeated attempts to undertake blueprints from theory to practise, a promised land had yet to be delivered. Instead of

8
It's important to note that many critics of utopianism did not distinguish the types of utopianism (blueprint and iconoclastic), however, it is clear that the objections I list here target blueprints.

perfect societies, the utopian projects of the nineteenth century resulted in war and large-scale human tragedy. The liberal analysis is a critique that holds utopianism responsible for the horrific events of the twentieth century. These modern anti-utopians believe history to have rendered a verdict on utopianism. Between the fall of Soviet communism, for which many had great expectations, and the belief that totalitarianism directly resulted from utopian dreams, liberal anti-utopians have plenty of historical fodder for critique. "The fundamental charge", as Barbara Goodwin and Keith Taylor (2009) put it, "was that all utopian thought depends on an exclusivist and authoritarian political outlook, antithetical to and destructive of the 'open society', a society marked out by liberty and tolerance" (p.94). To further summarise the liberal analysis, Leonard Schapiro, in his 1972 book *Totalitarianism*, lists the weaknesses of a utopian person as follows: "he is preoccupied with ends and indifferent to means; he views man and society as a totality; he makes firm and dogmatic assumptions; he is preoccupied with management; he neglects human variety" (p.85-90).

At the dawn of the Cold War, intellectuals lost their taste for any rationale that might justify or result in totalitarianism, for which blueprint utopianism had been indicted (Kumar, 1991; Levitas, 2010a; Olssen, 2006). Therefore, insofar as liberal anti-utopians wanted to advance a critique of totalitarianism, they denounced utopianism. The fear of totalitarian subservience resulted in the abandonment of socialist dreams in favor of a stringent liberalism that would protect individual freedom above all (Olssen, 2006). Utopian theorizing was essentially viewed as a danger to the Western values of liberalism and democracy, causing a lull in utopian research and an interruption in the progress of

utopian studies (Levitas, 2010a; Olssen, 2006; Sargisson, 1996; Halpin, 2003). To drive the fear home, liberals used "utopianism" as a catchall term for totalitarianism, nationalism, Nazism and Marxism. This trend was kicked off by Richard Crossman, who, in the 1930s, "enlivened Oxford tutorials by inventing mutually congratulatory dialogues between Plato, Stalin and Hitler" (Goodwin & Taylor, 2009, p.94).

Another liberal tactic used to strike fear into the heart of utopian sympathizers is the term 'dystopian', which was often used after the fall of the Soviet system to describe what happens to a society when utopian efforts go awry. As Jacoby (2005) notes, "dystopia seeks to frighten by accentuating contemporary trends that threaten freedom" (p. 12-13). Conventional wisdom since the collapse of Soviet communism dictates that dystopia is the actual outcome of utopian efforts (Jacoby, p.13). This logic paints Hitler, Stalin, Mao and Pol Pot as utopians, and liberals such as Frederick Hayek, Isaiah Berlin, and Karl Popper have classified despots as utopian in order to further their cause. This stance gives credence to Jacoby's (2005) aphorism, "to the desperate, utopian ideas seem meaningless; to the successful, they lack urgency or import; *to the thinking classes, they lead to a murderous totalitarianism*" (p.1, emphasis mine). In the following sections, I will elaborate on the liberal analyses of each of the three central above-mentioned critics, namely Hayek, Popper and Berlin.

Friedrich Hayek (1899-1992)

Austro-Hungarian born economist and political philosopher, Friedrick Hayek is known widely as a defender of classical liberalism. His greatest contribution to the debate

on utopianism is made in his seminal work, *The Road to Serfdom* (1944). Therein, Hayek forcefully advocates against central planning, socialism, and utopianism.

Hayek's critique of utopianism is founded on the basis of its conflict with the principles of liberalism, mainly liberty and individualism. His criticism is further abided by his strident naturalism and anti-rationalism. In *The Road to Serfdom* (1944), the problem Hayek identifies with utopianism is not with its particular ideals but the means he believed were required to attain them. In his speech entitled "On the pursuit of the ideal" delivered in 1988, Isaiah Berlin, echos Hayek's sentiment, tracing the lineage of the twentieth century's tyranny and oppression straight back to those ideals upon which utopianism is founded. Utopian ideals, Berlin fervently argued, can not be arrived at through moral means, as they necessitate the indoctrination of those who do not intuitively share the ideal (1997).

For Hayek, liberal ideals of liberty and individualism are necessarily compromised in the pursuit of utopia. For Hayek, the natural order of things is a "self-generating, 'spontaneous order'" (Goodwin & Taylor, 2009, p.96). Free markets, in all their spontaneity and unpredictability, are free and natural (Hayek, 1944). The rational effort of central planning that blueprint utopianism requires, Hayek argues, is incompatible with his liberal ideals. It is incompatible in two ways: 1) because it involves an unnatural coercion of the naturally spontaneous order of things, opposing his ideal of liberty and 2) because it involves planning for others and therefore opposes his ideal of individualism. The coercive nature of design ultimately leads to totalitarianism; only in the absence of planning can freedom remain unadulterated. This was, above all, Hayek's

motivating principle, as he sought to defend individual liberty in the face of the infringement he believed to be inherent to blueprints. The role of the state, for Hayek (1944), was not to make such normative decisions on behalf of its people—in fact, only minimal interference from government is tolerable in his view. Furthermore, "society is viewed as a growth rather than an artefact, which implies that pruning, not radical reconstruction, is the appropriate treatment" (Goodwin & Taylor, 2009, p.97).

In sum, Hayek (1944) famously argues in *The Road to Serfdom* that a "fatal conceit" lies at the heart of utopianism. Specifically, "the belief that through rational calculation and political will, society can be designed in ways that that will significantly improve the human conditions" is false (Olssen, p.100). It goes without saying that this view exemplifies the pessimistic nature of the anti-utopian trend. It is also a view that is shared by other critics of utopianism, including Karl Popper.

Karl Popper (1902-1994)

Popper objects to utopianism both on ideological and methodological grounds. First, I'll describe how his ideological qualms are determined by his fear of totalitarianism, followed by his more unique methodological misgivings which have to do with his understanding of science.

In *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (1945) and *The Poverty of Historicism* (1961) Popper argues against what he calls, "utopian engineering". Understanding utopian engineering to be "based on an a priori idea of rationality and a Platonic notion of ideal ends and means...he [Popper] condemns the utopian for playing God, reconstructing

society on the basis of human knowledge which is fallible" (Goodwin & Taylor, 2009, p.95). Utopian engineering, for Popper, means that before a situation can be improved we must first identify the end to which we should unequivocally commit ourselves. In *The Poverty of Historicism*, Popper warns that this holistic approach is dangerous and has historically led to persecution. Mark Olssen (2006) summarises Popper's view of utopianism as such:

> The holist, says Popper, believes that society is more than the sum of the individuals who comprise it, which gives a license to those who wish to curtail the rights and freedoms of the individual in the name of society's greater good. (Olssen, p.104)

In *The Open Society and its Enemies* (1945), Popper charges Plato, Hegel and Marx with historicism, a main tenet of utopianism that contains the view that there are "inexorable laws of historical destiny" (p. v). Historicism, for Popper, is main tenet of utopianism, which he believed resulted in totalitarianism. In Volume 1, dedicated to indicting Plato and his vision in the *Republic* Popper (1945) admonishes, "Even with the best intentions of making heaven on earth [utopianism] only succeeds in making it a hell —that hell which man alone prepares for his fellow-men" (p.168). Similar to Hayek, Popper problematizes the ideals of utopian blueprints due to the fact that they allow for behavior, just or unjust, to be rationalized in the name of the ideal. This rationalization is what led Plato, Popper (1945) argues, to justify a civic model built on deceit, eugenics and violence. The blank canvas the blueprint necessitates inevitably requires violence in order to purge society of its non-cooperative or simply unwanted members.[9] Another

9

Popperian distaste for utopianism results from his belief that utopia can only be ruled by the Few, an authoritarian notion that his liberal sensibilities could not resolve.

Popper (1945) also argues that education ought to make the individual autonomous, able to make their own choices in life, rather than serve to manipulate individuals to act as the state would have them. Popper (1945) doesn't think that society should rely on the greatness, wisdom and virtue of a few philosopher-king types. Instead, Popper argues in favor of an open society, which is to say a democratic state where the people can overthrow the government without violence.

Popper's methodological argument against blueprint utopianism is linked to his views on the nature of science. Goodwin and Taylor (2009) offer a summary of Popper's position when they write, "the piecemeal, democratic method of change, operating by trial and error, is more scientific by Popper's empiricist standard than the utopian method which, he claims, seeks to impose *in toto* a rational, unchanging, aprioristic blueprint" (p.95). Blueprints, as Popper conceives of them arise in the mind of the thinker and are bluntly imposed on this basis alone—without flexibility and without experimentation. The major weakness of utopianism for Popper is really its mistaken epistemology, as it is based on unfalsifiable claims—falsifiability being his condition of empirical verification. Utopianism is epistemologically flimsy and therefore should not be the basis of any effort for social or political change. Popper would much prefer the method of Tyack and Cuban that I discuss in a later section, as it upholds the trial-and-error reform structure.

Plato does suggest in the *Republic* that in order for his plan to be implemented all people over the age of ten would have to "disappear".

Isaiah Berlin (1909 - 1997)

Isaiah Berlin is known as the quintessential counter-Enlightenment liberal. This is because Berlin holds that the Enlightenment project of organizing society rationally in accordance with a universal ideal is incompatible with its belief in individual freedom, which is a core value of liberalism. Prioritizing his liberal convictions, Berlin denounces utopianism due to its monistic value structure and resultant potentially coercive social order.

Utopians, Berlin (1980) attests, are "single-minded monists, ruthless fanatics, men possessed by an all-embracing coherent vision, who do not know the doubts and agonies of those who cannot wholly blind themselves to reality" (p. 173). The reasoning that brings one to think they can and should rearrange an entire social order is, according to Berlin, "born of a naive and misplaced confidence in human rationality and a simplistic view of the world" (Garrard, 1997, p. 283). Subjecting people to a constrained way of being to suit the purposes of a utopian theory, even if well-intentioned, "always leads in the end to a terrible maiming of human beings, to political vivisection on an ever increasing scale" (Berlin, 1978 p. 193).

In addition to rejecting the coercive nature of utopianism, Berlin believed it foolish and fundamentally mistaken to believe that the world could be tailored to human design. Berlin (1997) claims:

> The assumption that reality was a harmonious whole, a rational structure whose logical necessity is revealed to reason, a marvellously coherent system which a rational being cannot think or wish to be otherwise and still remain rational, and

> in which, therefore, it must feel happy and fulfilled—all this is an enormous fallacy. Nature is not a perfect machine, nor an exquisite organism, nor a rational system; it is a savage jungle ... life is a perpetual battle. (p.302)

Utopianism is both an irrational and immoral act for Berlin. Predicting the ends of man through reason is a conceited thing to do. In *The Crooked Timber of Humanity*, the title of which was meant to reflect the human inability to construct perfection with imperfect tools, Berlin (1997) discusses the romantically flawed will of the utopian:

> If some ends recognised as fully human are at the same time ultimate and mutually incompatible, then the idea of a golden age, a perfect society compounded of a synthesis of all the correct solutions to all the central problems of human life, is shown to be incoherent in principle. (p. 236-7)

For Berlin, the ultimate problem with the Enlightenment project is that it depends on a view of the truth as singular and universal. Furthermore, Berlin argued, as the postmodernists did, that the utopian belief in the rational compatibility of ends and the belief in progress is a serious threat to the liberal commitment to freedom, i.e. the freedom to select and pursue one's own ideals. There are others who echo Berlin's disdain for wholesale implementation of social order schemes. The educational reformists to whom I now turn count themselves among this group.

Educational Tinkering: Tyack and Cuban

Historically, hopes for societal change have often been channeled through demands for educational reform. In *Tinkering Toward Utopia: A Century of Public*

School Reform, Tyack and Cuban (1995) argue that insofar as the school reform movement relies on blueprints for educational change it is misguided and irresponsible. With Millennium Goals and aspirations of the like repeatedly falling short, they aim their criticism at the utopian strategy they argue has as frequently failed to work. Tyack and Cuban (1995) point out several reasons to dispense with the blueprint strategy. First, they contend that the hard and fast visions of blueprints have made unrealistic promises, creating impossible expectations. Second, they highlight that blueprints require wholesale adoption, preventing the preservation of aspects of current systems that are, for all intents and purposes, working. Third, they oppose blueprints in virtue of their top-down implementation route.

Tyack and Cuban (1995) quote President Lyndon B. Johnson who, in the 1960's, remarked, "the answer to all our national problems comes down to a single word: education" (p. 2). The tradition of prescribing educational programs to mend the socio-economic ailments of society is certainly a mechanism of utopian theorising. However, with reference to educational reform, utopian blueprints have made a myriad of promises that have never seen the light of day. This has caused a pessimism toward ideal educational change among education workers and policy makers. As Tyack and Cuban (1995) put it, "Policy talk about educational reform had been replete with extravagant claims for innovations that flickered and faded. This is a pie-in-the-sky brand of utopianism, and it has often led to disillusionment among teachers and to public cynicism" (p.10). Attempts at wholesale innovation of educational systems have led to the public suspicion of utopian educational reform, as reality has yet to match outlined

aspirations.

In addition to not meeting educational ideals, Tyack and Cuban (1995) claim that overestimating the positive social change potential of education has repeatedly brought undue blame to institutions, teachers, and policy makers. They fear that the promise of an educational solution distracts the public eye from more serious political and economic issues: “it’s easier to provide vocational education than to remedy inequities in employment and gross disparities in wealth and income (Tyack & Cuban, 1995, p.4). Tyack and Cuban perceive the expectation of positive social change from educational practices to be a burden on those developing educational policy and on those working in the classroom. This expectation, which is derivative of utopianism in education, gives people undue hope.

Tyack and Cuban also criticize utopian blueprints due to the fact that they are often implemented in an authoritarian manner. Tyack and Cuban prefer a more egalitarian notion of reform, whereby members at all levels can participate in reform, over the top-down implementation of blueprints. Blueprints traditionally lack well-rounded input and feedback from the wide range of experts in the field. Furthermore, this method that neglects the voices of those encountering the very problems they seek to solve often offers irrelevant solutions. Blueprints, for Tyack and Cuban (1995), are often out of touch with local realities of schools.

Lastly, in noting that blueprints require comprehensive adoption, Tyack and Cuban (1995) hold that pre-existing valuable elements of society are discarded. With trends in research coming and going so frequently, they insist that education could benefit

from a resistance to change and to cease trying to satisfy the public's every whim. Continuity, compromise, and patience, they assert, are overlooked virtues of the educational reformer (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Indeed, time has often been retrospectively identified as the missing ingredient of failed reforms.

Tyack and Cuban delegitimize claims for utopian educational reform by charging the strategy with ineffectiveness and impracticality. Utopian blueprints have made exaggerated claims about the scope and depth of their influence. What society needs, according to Tyack and Cuban, is not utopian dreams but practical and realisable solutions to existing and imminent problems. *Tinkering Toward Utopia* is their attempt to argue that ameliorative, piecemeal reform is a more appropriate method of educational reform than implementing utopian blueprints. It is a more effective way of serving the educational community as it can target a single, local problem at a time. Furthermore, constant small changes can be considered part of a larger reform process; tinkering is an undertaking in what Raymond Williams (1961) has called "the long revolution". Tyack and Cuban (1995) note that while philosophers have been imagining blueprints, practitioners and policy makers have been tinkering all along. As a subtle and frill-free method of troubleshooting, tinkering often falls beneath the radar of those keeping track of the reform process (Tyack & Cuban, 1995). Ultimately, they argue that it is time to make tinkering the central focus of educational experts and leave the formulation of blueprints to novelists.

Postmodernism or Anti-modernism?

The implications of postmodernist criticism for utopianism are also widely cited in the literature (Halpin, 2003; Jacoby, 2007; Levitas, 2010a; Kumar, 1972; Goodwin & Taylor, 2009; Peters & Freeman-Moir, 2006). However, postmodernism is by no means a monolithic category, and therefore I will avoid making broad generalizations about it except to say postmodernism seeks to repudiate the Enlightenment project. In an effort to address only those doctrines of postmodernism that are relevant to the subject at hand, I will appeal to three individual principles that are representative of the postmodern intellectual movement. The first principle is the denial of traditional epistemology in favor of a constructivist epistemic paradigm, the second is the non-linear view of history, and the last is the view of cultural pessimism. The cultural logic contained in each of these postmodern principles marks a turn away from three cornerstones of utopianism (and modernism): universalism, progress and hope, respectively. I now will discuss each principle in turn.

Postmodernism marks the move from the acknowledgement of socially constructed knowledge to the claim that therefore all "knowledges" are relative (Butler, 2002). Classical epistemology has long been guided by Enlightenment principles—this view contains a commitment to the conception of objectivity and Truth that began with Plato. However, with increasing exposure to non-western cultural traditions, theories regarding the interaction between culture and the individual over time began to build. These theories hold realities to be subjective, propped up by conventions, language, and constant exposure. In essence, postmodernists argue that reality and our knowledge of it

is socially constructed.

This epistemic stance is incompatible with the classical epistemology's belief in objective reality and that universal truths can be uncovered. If there can be universal truths, then there can be universal values, a premise upon which blueprints are founded. There is no better example than that of Plato's theory of the forms, which asserted precisely that there are universal truths and that access to them involves a birthright and an extensive education. The ethical conclusion of universalism is that there are values that are just plain right for everyone. These values were uncovered through an investigation of human nature. But as I have said, postmodernism argues that concepts like human nature are socially constructed and therefore does not believe we have access to absolute truth.

Epistemologically, postmodernism leads to relativism. The ethical conclusion of postmodernism is value pluralism. Pluralism holds that values can be incommensurable and incompatible, but also be equally valid. This view allows for directly opposing views to coexist on equal footing. Value Pluralism, in the words of one of its original advocates, Isaiah Berlin[10], counters the notion that "all genuine questions must have one true answer and one only" (1990, p.5). He further argues that "the notion of the perfect whole, the ultimate solution, in which all good things coexist, seems to be not merely unattainable—that is a truism—but conceptually incoherent" (Berlin, 1990, p.13). It is incoherent because striving for a single ideal with the aim of a perfect society becomes impossible if

10 Isaiah Berlin is not a postmodernist as he did not subscribe to the definitive rejections of reason or progress. However, as a liberal and cosmopolitan, he renders one of the most well-articulated versions of pluralism out there and pluralism is a distinctly postmodern doctrine.

one accepts the thesis of values pluralism. In this way, postmodernism does not allow for utopian idealism nor the collective striving for a singular ideal.

The postmodern turn in intellectual history weeded out the concept of Platonic universalism or Enlightenment idealism. The notion that there are normative ideals in existence that are universally desirable, applicable and true is epistemologically incorrect in the eyes these thinkers. As Halpin (2003) has put it, “Discourses about social aims and progress are generally frowned upon by postmodernists because they imply that universal or foundational truth are discoverable and applicable as guidelines for political action, something they deny is either possible or necessary” (p.3). The rigidity of the ideals contained in some utopian blueprints entail conflicts with the postmodern view that values are not objective and universal but socially constructed and, as such, multiple and diverse. Postmodernism denies the possibility of absolute truth regarding normative affairs and consequently also undermines the grand narratives that they underpin.

“Grand narratives,” “metanarratives” or “master narratives” (as they have been termed) are not all that different from blueprints. They are both historical accounts that presume that there is a logic behind the order and the way that life unfolds and that we can understand it. Popper used the term historicity to refer to what metanarratives do. His treatment of the work of Plato, Hegel and Marx is a good example of analysis of metanarratives.

In *The Postmodern Condition: A report on knowledge*, Jean-Francois Lyotard (1999) calls for the end of the formulation of metanarratives that offer comprehensive explanations (or sweeping interpretations, depending on your perspective) for the

unraveling of history. Postmodernists defend this position by arguing 1) that the knowledge and experience of history did not progress in a logical or linear fashion and 2) no such totalizing truth exists and 3) even if it did, one could not possibly recount it from one's embedded positionality. 2) and 3) can be inferred from the postmodern epistemology I discussed above. 1), however, has major implications about the intuitive way history has traditionally been conceived.

Unlike proponents of metanarratives, postmodernist theorists are not so eager to explain away chaos. Furthermore, postmodernists argue that metanarratives conceal more than they reveal. As Peters and Marshall (1996) explain, "modernity as the progress of a universal reason conceals a set of values which were/are basically Eurocentric, logocentric and homocentric under the guise of a universalism, an allegedly historical impartiality and neutrality" (p.159). The relations of power in which they exist determine the authoritative voice that offers metanarratives. In other words, there is no objective, impartial bird's eye view of how the history of the world transpired. This is a significant turn away from the Enlightenment project, which believed that through reason such an account could and should be deduced. Lyotard (1999) believes the forsaking of metanarratives to be the quintessentially postmodern act:

> Simplifying to the extreme, I define postmodern as incredulity toward metanarratives. This incredulity is undoubtedly a product of progress in the sciences: but that progress in turn presupposes it. To the obsolescence of the metanarrative apparatus of legitimation corresponds, most notably, the crisis of metaphysical philosophy and of the university institution which in the past relied

> on it. The narrative function is losing its functors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal. It is being dispersed in clouds of narrative language elements—narrative, but also denotative, prescriptive, descriptive, and so on. Conveyed within each cloud are pragmatic valencies specific to its kind. Each of us lives at the intersection of many of these. However, we do not necessarily establish stable language combinations, and the properties of the ones we do establish are not necessarily communicable." (p.xxiv)

To narrow in on the issue of progress, it becomes clear that postmodernists seek to erode the idea of a social progression of history that is championed by modernity.

Modernity conceives of the trajectory of history as having a telos, namely that of progress. Postmodernists deny history-as-progress and that history has any telos or ultimate objective at all. For every historical advance, there has been a corresponding regression; the invention of the printing press, one of the greatest contributions to society amazingly allowed for information to be disseminated all over the world and it also facilitated the production and strengthened the impact of propaganda.

A worldview based on the postmodern theory of history is one of stark acceptance and skepticism, "life has no 'outside' as such, happiness within it being gained by 'saying yes to the transience' and by 'making a friend of the void'" (Halpin, 2003, p.3). Skepticism is the only viable response to the concepts of Truth and progress that modernity held certain. Hope for any kind of specific future is useless. Some social theorists, like Merritt Roe Smith and Leo Marx (1994), have linked the pessimistic condition to the role of technology in producing postmodernity:

> In their euphoric embrace of that faith, the utopian thinkers of the Enlightenment invented a historical romance called Progress. In it they assigned a heroic role to the mechanic arts. That role, like the romance as a whole, rested on the old foundationalist faith in the capacity of the scientific rationalism to yield incontrovertible knowledge. But the part assigned to the mechanic arts in those early years, though heroic, actually was modest compared with what it became once it had been renamed "technology". By the 1920's "technology," no longer confined to its limited role as a mere practical means in the service of political ends, was becoming a flamboyant, overwhelming presence...in the aftermath of World War II, however, what had been a dissident minority's disenchantment with this overreaching hero spread to large segments of the population. As the visible effects of technology became more dubious, modernism lost its verve and people found the romance less and less appealing. After the Vietnam era, the ruling theme of Progress came to seem too fantastic, and admirers of the old Enlightenment romance now were drawn to a new kind of postmodern tragicomedy. (p.153)

Another more pervasive account of cultural pessimism comes from Oliver Bennett. In his 2001 book, *Cultural Pessimism: Narratives of decline in the postmodern world*, Bennett argues that cultural pessimism can be construed as arising from the postmodern turn:

> Cultural pessimism arises with the conviction that the culture of a nation, a civilization or of humanity itself is in an irreversible process of decline. In its severest form, it goes beyond the idea of culture as a set of intellectual and artistic

> practices, or even culture as a 'signifying system', and attaches itself to culture as a whole way of life...in the era of postmodernity, that is, the last few decades of the twentieth century, narratives of decline emerged throughout the West in widely disparate fields; that these narratives were deeply pessimistic in their implications; and that, taken together, they produced a representation of decline which could be seen as cultural in its broadest sense (p.1).

This pessimism constitutes an aversion not only to blueprints but to all theories of utopianism (although it applies to blueprints most severely). As I described above, imagining utopia involves a critique of one's current reality and an implicit hope that it could be otherwise. Therefore, cultural pessimism precludes the potential for utopia to be envisioned.

A Final Word on Criticisms

The objections to blueprint utopianism I have elaborated here are not exhaustive. For example, many anti-utopians have other concerns in addition to their principal objections. Hayek is most worried about totalitarianism, but he also doubts the feasibility of utopia and rejects universalism as well. Common threads can thus be found in all three critical stances. As I have suggested above, a significant effect of these counter-utopian arguments has been the development of a grim worldview that is justified by the dubious attainability and questionable ideological backing of utopian ideals.

The liberals, reformists and postmodernists all make warranted claims against utopianism. However, the critique is narrow as it fails to acknowledge all forms of

utopianism—it has focused most of its energy on blueprint utopianism. This is not surprising; blueprint utopianism has been rhetorically successful due to its elaborate and detailed promises about a future people can hope for. Yet although blueprints do historically constitute a substantial part of utopian theory, they do not make up the whole; there are also non-blueprint utopian theories. In the late twentieth century and the twenty-first century, non-blueprint utopias are increasingly being formulated to assuage criticisms discussed above without relinquishing utopian hope altogether. One promising alternative to the blueprint that has surfaced or, more aptly, resurfaced is 'iconoclastic utopianism'. I will now turn to an exploration of this form of utopianism as it is discussed in the work of Russell Jacoby (1999; 2007).

Iconoclastic Utopianism

At present, utopianism in education has been heavily damaged by the arguments outlined above. However, in ceasing to entertain the notion of utopia, the baby was thrown out with the bathwater. Fortunately, the core merits of utopianism, idealism and hope for social change, have not been completely eradicated. In the streets, civil movements of resistance, such as the 2012 Québec student movement and the international Occupy movements, which began in the fall of 2011, are both protest movements fighting back against the notion that there is no alternative to the present social order. Similarly, in the academy, a faction of social scientists and philosophers who sympathize with the above objections but are nonetheless frustrated with the prevailing orthodoxy of cynicism, are determined to rethink the potential for utopianism.

Utopian Studies is thus a fresh and growing field that is invigorated by new ways of thinking about old ideas.

In *Picture Imperfect*, Russell Jacoby (2007) discussed an alternative way of envisioning utopia. Iconoclastic utopianism marks a move away from many of the traditional elements found in blueprints. This move away consists primarily in the fact that iconoclastic utopias do not admit of a detailed vision of the future. Jacoby (2007) comments, "in outfitting utopia, they [blueprinters] order from the catalogue of their day. With their schedules and seating arrangements, their utopias stand condemned not by their capaciousness but by their narrowness, not by their extravagance but their poverty. History soon eclipses them" (p.32). Iconoclastic utopians are weary of the seductive promises made by the blueprint tradition. Supporters of the iconoclastic utopian approach have, throughout history, "fashioned a utopianism committed to the future but reserved about it. Against the dominant tradition of blueprints, they offered an imageless utopianism laced with passion and spirit" (Jacoby, 2007, p.33). Iconoclasts envision the conditions for utopia but refrain from depicting utopia itself. For example, in thinking more broadly of justice rather than specifically of socialism, iconoclasts cut back on having to contest recipe after recipe for a perfect society. Spurning the trial and error method of establishing a utopia is a defense mechanism, that allows for the disappointment of a failure to be avoided. Iconoclasts believe it is important to protect society from the fallout, as each regrettable blueprint costs the collective consciousness of society more in hope and resiliency (Jacoby, 2007, p.34).

Iconoclastic utopianism dates back to the Medieval period, to Maimonides,

however its lack of solid consequential features earned it scant attention, Jacoby (2007) explains. He remarks that iconoclasm was quite common among many European, twentieth-century Jewish scholars such as Theodore W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin, Herbert Marcuse and Ernst Bloch, the most iconoclastic text being Ernst Bloch's *The Spirit of Utopia* (2000). These scholars "resisted representing the future" and resisted visualizing perfection (Jacoby, 2007, p. xvii). This tendency is historically predicated upon the Maimonidian tradition of abstaining from formulating positive descriptions of God. To engage in positive or affirmative characterization of God is to impose a limit on the very concept. To refrain from this transgression, Jacoby explains that Maimonides encouraged the formulation of only negative attributions to God, "for whatever we utter with the intention of extolling or praising Him, contains something that cannot be applied to God, and includes derogatory expressions; it is therefore more becoming to be silent, and to be content with intellectual reflection" (Maimonides, 1956, p.85).

Iconoclasts are the descendants of this logic. Just as Jewish thinkers would not define God, Jacoby argues, the iconoclastic utopians refuse to concretely visualize utopia for fear of restricting it and as a way of giving it its due deference. "Like the resistance to naming God," Jacoby (2007) reflects, "the reluctance to depict utopia does not diminish but exalts it. It bespeaks the gap between now and then. It refuses to reduce the unknown future to the well-known present, the hope to its cause" (p. 36).

Iconoclastic utopia may not be a means to inspiring revolution but it can easily encourages a belief in one's ability to overcome present odds. The iconoclastic strategy speaks to pessimism and its political conclusion, apathy, by creating a horizon of hope to

ponder. The strategy relies upon the idea that by thinking critically about one's own world and about utopia, one can begin to think a better world is possible. Iconoclasts are meant to be equal parts realist and idealist—moderate utopians, but fervent critics. Iconoclasts, after all, were "utopians against the current. They did not surrender to the drumbeat of everyday emergencies *(as reformers do)*. Nor did they paint utopia in glowing colors *(as blueprint utopians do)* (Jacoby, 2007, p.xviii)". Although iconoclastic utopians did not let their idealism get the best of them, they were nonetheless committed to "a very different future of harmony and happiness" (Jacoby, 2007, p.85). Indeed, iconoclastic utopians are not totally estranged from futural thought, but they are restrained by custom to temper their idealism for fear of spoiling what dreams may come. As Jacoby (2007) explains:

> While Jewish history is replete with reformers, revolutionaries and visionaries, it includes almost no equivalent to Thomas More, Charles Fourier, or Edward Bellamy, who demarcated the exact dimensions of utopia. Rather, it gave rise to iconoclastic utopians drenched in romantic and mystical longing for the future. (p.85)

In light of the criticisms I outlined above, it seems clear why many might interpret iconoclastic utopianism to be a more friendly strategy for change than the blueprint.

Some educational theorists have gone the iconoclastic route, without necessarily being aware of the framework's history. Henry Giroux and David Halpin are two educationally-oriented thinkers who have adopted the iconoclastic framework to articulate their conceptions of utopianism. Their contemporary articulations of

iconoclastic utopianism involve asserting an approach that discards features of blueprint utopianism. New utopian iconoclasts prefer to rely on a convergence of principles to incite change namely, critical thinking, hope, attention to socio-historical circumstances, and collectivity. David Halpin's theory of utopian realism and Henry Giroux's theory of educated hope both exemplify this new iconoclastic approach to utopianism.

David Halpin: Utopian Realism

David Halpin has been fixated on rehabilitating utopian thinking for education for more than ten years. In 1999, Halpin began his quest by affirming that a world without utopias "would be a world without social hope, a world of resignation to the status quo" (p. 435). Halpin has dedicated much of his career to articulating a viable and relevant utopian theory for educational policy.

In his book *Hope and education: The role of the utopian imagination*, Halpin (2003) structures his model of utopian realism to pacify detractors and satisfy utopian hopefuls. Halpin does this by constructing a theory of utopianism that calls for a more modest revolution than that of utopias past. Utopian realism constructs "a possible future for education that takes into consideration actually existing trends in the modern world' (Halpin, 1999, p. 358). Utopian realism is the shell of an action plan, the intention of which is for utopian realism to offer "integrated solutions to problems instead of unilateral ones" (2003, p.7). The method Halpin puts forward attempts to identify "the forces and resources within the present social order that are capable of transforming it for the better, so as to provide a significant dynamic for action in the here and now" (Halpin,

2003, p.59). This, Halpin believes, will allow for peoples' hopes to translate into action plans. Putting this utopian imagination to work with these guidelines can jumpstart the kind of change Halpin would like to see. Utopian realists, at bottom, aim:

> to identify and describe a vision for the future that is based upon an understanding of the forces and resources within the present order that are capable of transforming it for the better in the future, so as to provide a significant dynamic for action in the here and now. (Halpin, 2003c)

Utopian realism is a way of transforming hopeful thoughts for the future into action plans for change (Halpin, 2003, p.60). With these plans and an optimistic frame of mind, an individual can become realistically hopeful about the future by "placing sensible limits on the imaginings of utopians through encouraging a form of practical rather than naïve optimism" (Halpin, 2003, p.60). For Halpin, utopian realism is about the "responsible exercise of hope in the *present*" (Halpin, 2003, p.60).

Utopian realism also aims to overcome 'either-or' politics in education; in politics, this strategy is often referred to as "third way". Utopian realism, for Halpin (2003), is meant to bridge the gap between traditional utopian idealism on one end and postmodern scepticism on the other. Ultimately, the aim is to bring hope back to educational deliberations. This conception is reflective of Halpin's iconoclastic penchant, as its aim is to facilitate hopeful imagining—the precondition for change--rather than to specify how the change needs to happen or what the future will look like. By formulating his utopian theory this way, Halpin dodges the criticism aimed at blueprints.

Halpin further evades the scorn of critics by not making all-encompassing

prescriptions. He is uneasy with the practice of authoritatively imposing a one-size-fits-all vision. For this reason, Halpin (2003) concedes, " ...postmodern scepticisms are not only proper, but imperative, especially in those circumstances today in which people are the victims of particular forms of totalizing discourse—crude nationalism arguably being the most potent example at the moment" (p.4). Halpin articulates a theory of utopia that requires a level of specificity and input from the community that stands to change. This, Halpin (2007) maintains, sets utopian realism apart from unrealistic blueprints.

In keeping with the iconoclastic tradition, Halpin emphasizes reforming the actual contexts rather than wiping socio-historical slates clean. Halpin designed utopian realism to be appreciative of observable socio-historical trends. This kind of attention to relevant, local phenomena is what Tyack and Cuban believed to be missing from utopian thought. Nonetheless, he continues, "meaningful political action, both generally and in the education context in particular, cannot surely proceed without some embedded sense of of value" (p.4). Halpin, after all, believes that hopeful and realistic imagining contributes to hopeful and realistic action, bridging the gap between idealism and realism. Halpin affirms the role idealism has to play in practical action.

Halpin (2003) also defends a measure of utopian idealism based on the fact that its absence would do us more harm than good: "postmodernism's mockery at the possibility of social progress along such lines, and its scornful dismissal of the idea that specific standards of validity are worth searching for is likely to be self-fulfilling if we are not careful" (p.5). Halpin, therefore, does hold onto some of the Enlightenment conception of utopianism—namely, the belief in social progress.

By thinking about utopianism as a strategy for change as Halpin does, one quickly realizes one of its central benefits is that, unlike many postmodern discourses, it does not merely offer critique. Instead, Halpin's utopianism also offers solutions in the form of hopes. These aspirations, insofar as individuals think them through, serve to counteract pessimism and apathy. The belief in an improved future and the open anticipation of it triggers the optimistic conviction that present life can be improved (Halpin, 2003c). Criticism alone does not have this effect on people. Utopian thinking, à la Halpin, is the first step toward an individual commitment to change. In this way, the utopian method constitutes a personal transformation, a way of relieving one's self from a debilitating sense of resignation. For Halpin, this relief is especially important for those in and around the educational community because active participation and hope are necessary if real change is to occur.

Like all utopians, Halpin is concerned for the future of education, but he is not willing to sacrifice the present for it. Halpin accepts the educational reality and seeks to improve it. However, he is not fixated on a particular vision of what the future may look like or on how many steps it will take to get to a perfect educational system. Rather, he is concerned with catalyzing real and relatable efforts for change that he argues begin in the "radical utopian imagination" (2007, p.244).

Henry Giroux: Educated Hope

Henry Giroux works primarily in the field of utopian pedagogy, a field that emerged in response to the perceived failings of critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy is

sympathetic to anti-utopian principles of disenchantment and despair, which, for Giroux, get in the way of positive engagement with education. Utopian pedagogy goes beyond critique, deconstruction, and placing blame—it supplies its devotees with a powerful sense of agency for them to enact the change they hope for. Giroux's utopianism embodies and furthers the mission of utopian pedagogy and he remains one of the field's most renowned contributors.

Following the thought of Pierre Bourdieu, Giroux (2003) calls upon the notion of 'realist utopias' as a conceptual tool for connecting "theory, critique, education and the discourse of possibility" (Giroux, 2006; 2007). For Giroux, utopianism is an ongoing process with no particular destination or point at which striving for the aims of justice will end. Giroux also refuses to identify ends or ideals worth striving for in order to avoid encouraging a homogeneous vision of the future.

Giroux's utopianism signifies his commitment to experimenting with utopian variables in education, with the hope that new and interesting ways of conceiving of alternatives to the present neoliberal social order will emerge. In essence, Giroux's utopianism is directly concerned with exploring the relationship between critical citizenship and education (Giroux, 2003), the hope being that the latter can and should facilitate the former.

In order to demonstrate his dissatisfaction with these prevailing pessimistic times, Giroux (2007) concedes "it has become easier to imagine the end of the world than the end of capitalism" (p.25). According to Giroux, we are settled in dystopia because our social condition is so "impoverished" that we cannot enact an alternative to it, even in the

face of widespread oppression (2007, p.32). By “impoverished”, Giroux is referring to is our intellectual/human resources. Giroux (2007) observes that so many “refuse to address human suffering and social justice” or if they do, they adopt the increasingly common view that fundamental improvement is only possible from the inside of capitalism. From the perspective of a cog in the neoliberal machine, social improvement is dependent on market forces. The adoption of this point of view by those who Giroux deems to be society’s guardians prevents their ability to offer social critique and consequently, poses a great threat to utopianism. This route to social improvement “undermines the need to reclaim utopian thinking both as a discourse of human rights and as a moral referent for the project of dismantling and transforming dominant structures of wealth and power” (2007, p.32).

In addition to offering the above critique of the current social order, Giroux also elaborates a theory of ‘educated hope’ to combat anti-utopianism and the apathy brought on by the seemingly insurmountable status quo. Educated hope is laid out for the first time in his article, “Utopian Thinking Under the Sign of Neoliberalism: Towards a Critical Pedagogy of Educated Hope”. Here, Giroux (2003) describes educated hope as a:

> precondition for individual and social struggle, the ongoing practice of critical education in a wide variety of sites, and a mark of courage on the part of the intellectuals in and out of the academy who use the resources of theory to address pressing social problems. (p.98)

Giroux goes on to characterize his version of hope as:

> a referent for civic courage and its ability to mediate the memory of loss and the

> experience of injustice as part of a broader attempt to open up new locations of struggle, contest the workings of oppressive power and undermine various forms of domination" (p.98).

Hope, for Giroux, is the longing for that results from the intuition that "something's missing" (2001). Giroux's aim is to direct this naturally occurring, underdeveloped longing into educated hope (2003). Educated hope is, at its core, about keeping critical thought alive and open to a future of radical possibility. Educated hope involves speaking the language of possibility: the possibility of counter-hegemonic uprisings, the possibility of equality, the possibility of free education. Voicing these possibilities can open the window for their actual manifestation (Peters & Freeman-Moir, 2006).

For Giroux, educated hope is a concrete utopian endeavor as it serves to empower the agency of those who personify it, "fashioning those human capacities in which people might recognize the potential they have as political agents capable of imagining new democratic forms of human association in the world and carrying out initiatives necessary to construct them" (Giroux, 2001, p. 235). Educated hope arms citizens with a toolbelt of radical skills enabling them to:

> create citizens who understand the relationship between power and knowledge, are capable of questioning the basic assumptions that govern political life, recognise the limitations of contemporary institutions, possess the courage required to take risks and challenge power, and are equipped with the skills and confidence needed to transform existing social and political institutions rather than simply adapt to them. (Webb, 2009, p.752)

On a collective level, educated hope and critical citizenship education share a common dream of equipping citizens with the ability, the desire and the confidence to envision their utopian dreams.

Blueprints and Iconoclastic Utopianism

Until the liberal and postmodern stifling of idealism, the utopian conversation in the philosophy of education was lively. Philosophers had high hopes and robust ideals — Plato followed the Good and Rousseau was devoted to Nature. Philosophers of education constructed their systems as maps leading to their vision of the Good Life. The iconoclastic tradition of utopian thought, however, reveals another strategy for stirring up the optimism necessary to bring about social change.

Halpin's utopian discourse addresses the field of educational policy and Giroux's discourse is squarely in the realm of radical or utopian pedagogy, but nonetheless, it can be said that there are points at which their views converge and points at which they diverge. Halpin's utopian realism accepts the state of educational policy and seeks new and creative ways to improve it. Giroux's utopian pedagogy, on the other hand, expresses a much more militant opposition to the status quo; it "mounts an explicit challenge to neoliberal hegemony and draws on utopianism as a direct form of oppositional practice" (Webb, 2009, p.750). Furthermore, Halpin's utopian realism has a stipulated definition of utopia, whereas Giroux's utopian pedagogy employs a concept of utopia that does not admit of a strict or delimiting definition. Instead, the aim of utopian pedagogy is to keep the very foundational concept of utopia open to growth, input and alteration.

Unlike the extravagant blueprints Plato and Rousseau conceived of, Halpin and Giroux usher in a comparatively sensible alternative utopianism. As iconoclasts, they makes fewer promises and set up less of a chance for disappointment. Therefore, the failure of either of these theories less likely to produce more justification for the anti-utopian. On the other hand, perhaps playing it safe also means that these iconoclastic formulations dull the sword of utopianism by removing arguably its sharpest aspect: its concrete vision. With such an outstanding reservation on the table, the debate about utopianism for education has not yet reached its conclusion.

The belief that contemporary efforts for social change lack energy and optimism is certainly a good reason to revisit utopian theories. However, the question of which types of utopianism are worth pursuing in today's world still lacks consensus in the educational community. Blueprints were once in vogue. As of late, iconoclastic utopias have become the fashion. This trend has emerged as a result of the need to revive the hopefulness utopianism can offer and because iconoclastic utopian theories step on far fewer toes than the blueprints do. Ultimately, the debate comes down to two utopian strategies: 1) the firm affirmation of universal ideal(s), planning, and a concrete vision of the future and 2) a more laissez-faire approach that attempts to converge critical thinking, hope, attention to socio-historical circumstances, and collective efforts. Iconoclastic utopianism raises the question of whether we need to posit universal ideals in order to improve education in practical terms. Or perhaps we can transform society for the better with only a critical gaze, an optimistic attitude, and comrades-in-arms. Gramsci (1978) captures the latter sentiment in his famous dictum, "pessimism of the intellect and

optimism of the will" (p.9). In the following chapter, I explore the extent of iconoclastic utopianism's practical reach. In addition, I will offer considerations for a new direction for utopian thinking in education.

Chapter 3: Iconoclastic utopianism and beyond

As I have shown, when blueprint utopianism fell from grace it was met with a barrage of criticism. Critics condemned blueprints as totalitarian, unrealistic, and universalist. One response to these condemnations has been to revisit iconoclastic utopianism, a more moderate and flexible utopianism that circumvents much of the criticism that I laid out in Chapter 2. As I noted, Halpin and Giroux both articulate contemporary theories of iconoclastic utopianism. In doing so, they do not offer rigid formulas for a perfect world, nor do they attempt to define perfection or identify concrete ideals. Instead, their theories are fortified by the principles of critical thinking, a hopeful orientation toward the future, an appreciation of present day circumstances, and collectivity. Their aim is to inspire and enable educational practices for social change by creating the preconditions for social change rather than mapping out the changes themselves.

In this final chapter, I will begin by exploring an educational application for iconoclastic utopianism namely, how iconoclastic utopianism can supplement transformative learning and its objectives. In doing so, I will refer to the work of adult educator, Budd L. Hall.

Following this analysis of the educational implications of iconoclastic utopianism, I will underscore some of its practical and theoretical limitations. The shortcomings of contemporary iconoclastic utopianism, I indicate, derive from its aversion to affirming universal ideals. While Halpin and Giroux have been quite busy satisfying the strictures put in place by the critics of utopianism—a noble effort—I argue that they have excluded

utopianism's most active ingredient: universalism. Iconoclastic utopianism does indeed serve a purpose; in fact, it can serve the purposes of adult educators and civic educators quite well. However, I question the ability of iconoclastic utopianism to deliver the change utopianism is meant to bring about. Iconoclastic utopianism, I argue, is not an acceptable substitute for blueprint utopianism.

Lastly, I will briefly outline some considerations for new directions for utopian philosophies of education. I claim that it is possible and worthwhile to conserve the transformative and assertive power universalism brings to utopianism alongside the more open-ended iconoclastic utopianism. This kind of reconciliatory approach mirrors the kind of theory currently being offered in the field of ethics and development by Martha Nussbaum (1999; 2003; 2009; 2011). Nussbaum advocates a theory for development that is founded on a set of universal principles which also permits of additions and further exploration. Using utopianism to promise a perfect world may have been a fool's dream, but using utopianism to ensure a minimal level of well-being for all, as Nussbaum proposes, may not be. In this chapter, I hope to begin a conversation about a two-tiered theory of utopianism for social change. This theory consists of a foundation of universal principles and, once established, an iconoclastic phase of exploring and experimenting with more localized strategies can be engaged in. I'll discuss how and why this two-tiered utopianism is a theory worthy of future study for scholars of education concerned with social change.

Implementing Iconoclastic Utopianism

Bud Hall: Iconoclastic Utopianism for Adult Education

The first way that iconoclastic utopianism can be of practical consequence to education is articulated by, Canadian adult educator, Budd L. Hall. Hall (2009) is motivated by the problem of pessimism and the feeling of powerlessness in the face of the globalization in his article "The Right to a new utopia: Adult learning and the changing world of work in an era of global Capitalism". Therein, Hall makes the case for New Utopian visions, which take up an iconoclastic strategy. Hall posits that transformative learning practices can facilitate the development of this new vision and, in turn, be guided by it.

While scholars have been busy arguing against standard versions of utopianism, Hall declares that globalization has created another utopian vision, one that has come to dominate the Western consciousness. Popularly caricatured as the "McWorld" vision, this view is at bottom a global market utopia. Describing this view, Hall (2009) remarks that:

> Globalization is a utopian vision. The creation of an integrated twenty-four hours per day economic system that allows total freedom for investors to find cheap money to borrow and high returns on investment anywhere in the world—is a dream. That all limits on corporate and individual profits would be removed—is a dream. That all workers in all countries would be integrated into global networks of production. That responsibilities to shareholders could take precedence over health and safety and environmental concerns—is a dream. (p.97)

Corporate multinationals and political leaders, he argues, are promoting this utopian

vision as the *only* pathway to a better world (Hall, 2009, p.98). This promise is a vaunted answer to the dreams of both the rich and the poor, acting as an insurance policy for the rich and a lottery ticket for the poor. As a result of this clever marketing effort, this vision of utopia is increasingly becoming a reality.

This global market utopia has received a spectrum of responses from the field of adult education and training. Some have embraced the "McWorld" mission and what hope it can provide. Others are making the best of what seems to be an unassailable viewpoint. Hall comments that this despondent response from both adult educators and from the general public is particularly reflective of what Linda McGuaig (1999) calls "the cult of impotence". "Canadians", McQuaig (1999) argues, "have been sold a myth of powerlessness because it serves the interest of the current ruling alliances—not because, in fact, we do not have any power as citizens" (p.283). This feeling of powerlessness leads to a paralyzing pessimism, which in turn, guards the "McWorld" cultural paradigm.

Fortunately, there are others who are more resistant and are looking for ways to counteract the global market utopian vision. Hall, who belongs to this latter category, notes that policy is written by subscribers of each of these three positions and that therefore a strong line of defence is difficult to muster. Nonetheless, there are education associations that have amended their mission statements to include an anti-globalization campaign. For example, Hall (2009) notes:

> The International Council for Adult Education (ICAE), a global network of some 700 local and national NGOs interested in adult learning, organized a sixth World Assembly of Adult Education in Jamaica in 2001, calling for global advocacy

> towards adult learning for individual and collective transformation in the age of globalization. (p.106-107)

Hall contends that the scholars in the field of adult education and other like-minded members of society can and ought to facilitate new directions for utopian thinking. Hall (2009) wants to rally the troops and so he announces, “it is time for the resources and capabilities of the adult learning communities to support the search for new utopian visions” (p.107).

With this responsibility in mind, Hall turns to a means for change that is congruent with the iconoclastic strategy I have described. Placing a similar emphasis on critical thinking, hope, attention to specificity and collective imagining as Halpin and Giroux do, Hall’s strategy fits into the iconoclastic mould. He makes no attempt at defining a perfect world or ascribing universal ideals and places most of the emphasis on critical thinking and collective deliberation.

The centrally iconoclastic feature of Hall’s strategy for a new utopia is that he believes that change begins in the mind of the individual. Hall (2009) declares that, “the most powerful instruments for transforming the world that we have are our own minds” (p.107). This insistence works to inciting a powerful sense of agency in the individual. Combined with creative thought and collective deliberation, the seeds of a new, anti-capitalist utopia, Hall believes, can be sown. One specific way adult education and training facilitate this kind of utopian thinking is by supporting “the release of our creativity and imagination” (p.108). Hall (2006) also calls for adult educators to engage in creative inquiries themselves for the purpose of furthering new directions for utopia.

Hall (2006) has identified one such inquiry to be that of interdisciplinary investigation of social movement learning; he urges:

> a more systematic investigation into the learning and knowledge strategies of social movements is also an important potential contribution to the scholarship of social movements themselves. It is time that the artificial boundaries that separate learning, educational, and knowledge theorists from the social movement theorists in sociology, history, political science, gender studies, postcolonial studies, or elsewhere are ruptured. The achievement of the Utopian project of a world that we want is brought closer when we learn how and why to transform existing power relations in living otherwise. (p. 236-237)

Like his contemporary iconoclastic counterparts, Halpin and Giroux, Hall calls for people to turn to their real, local community efforts for indications of a utopian vision that is compatible with their political and ethical views. “New utopian visions” Hall (2009) promises:

> are found in local community gardens, in community shared agricultural schemes, in individual and family choices to live more simple lives, in the large and still growing movement for ‘green economic development’, for social economies of varying kinds and in the literally millions of creative ideas that women and men are engaged in as ways to survive in a world which they do not like, yet know not how to change. (107-108)

These are the real projects that require investigation and extrapolation, as we can learn from those practices in which we are already involved. Hall wants people to explore their

own micro utopias to discern cultural phenomena worth perpetuating in the name of a new direction for utopia. This is how iconoclastic utopianism gets implemented through adult education, for Hall.

More specifically, Hall has discussed this very phenomenon in the context of his theory of social movement learning, whereby direct and incidental knowledge that may contribute to the formulation of new utopian theories is acquired. Hall (2005) describes social movement learning as, "a) learning by persons who are part of any social movement; and b) learning by persons outside of a social movement as a result of the actions taken or simply by the existence of social movements" (p. 6). By reflecting upon one's experiences in a social movement and engaging in what Hall has called "cognitive praxis", one can keep track of the insightful ideas, effective tactics, and productive behaviors that result (Hall, 2005, p.7). This knowledge can, in turn, generate new directions for utopianism.

If citizens can work together, using their creative and critical capacities, with a belief in their power to make a difference, a new utopian vision can begin to develop, according to Hall. The hope here is that with enough support, this new vision—a vision of the people—can overwhelm the free market utopia from within, creating a popular distaste for the McWorld vision. One thing Hall is certain of is that adult learning can play a crucial role in the development of this new utopian vision—he remarks, "the primary goal of adult education was to convince people of the possibility of change. All other goals can be achieved if we believe that change is possible" (p.109).

Limitations of Iconoclastic Utopianism

Iconoclastic utopianism is not all that different from blueprint utopianism in the sense that they both share a purpose, namely, to bring about societal transformation toward a better future. However, as we have seen so far, there is a gap between what iconoclasts want to do and what the theoretical structure they have committed to will allow. In order to clarify, I will highlight the limited nature of each iconoclastic theory that I have articulated above, especially in relation to the theory from which they stem—the blueprint. In doing so, I will rely heavily on the work of Darren Webb (2009) who has criticized iconoclastic utopian theories.

Blueprints certainly have their shortcomings, as I outlined in Chapter 2. The response to these shortcomings has been to offer an alternative utopianism. Iconoclastic utopian theories have become popular due to the fact that they allow utopians, liberals, educational policy theorists, and postmodernists to strike a compromise. Yet while the desire to please all parties is certainly an admirable one in and of itself, I argue that utopianism has sacrificed too much in this bargain. *Prima facie*, the iconoclastic theories of Halpin and Giroux are enticing; they prepare people to enact the change they'd like to see in the world. Giroux has made it plain that educated hope *is* his utopia: 'educated hope as a form of utopianism' and similarly, 'utopian thinking as a form of educated hope' (Giroux, 2001, p. 238, 245). Educated hope equips individuals with the sense of agency necessary to challenge dominant ideologies and seize their utopian aspirations. However, Giroux has also called for a more specific vision, although one has yet to be articulated, as Webb (2009) points out:

> Thus far, however, Giroux himself has refrained from developing such a vision. Aside from elastic phrases such as ‘radical democracy’ and ‘a future in which human beings realize their full potential’ (Giroux, 2001, p. 227), it is difficult to discern any substantive notion of what the good life might entail. This, of course, is wholly in keeping with his conviction that utopia needs to be ‘grounded’ and emergent rather than predetermined by privileged intellectuals. (p.753)

At bottom, Giroux’s utopianism goes no further than to create the potential for change.

Halpin’s theory of utopian realism also relies on the welling up of potential to lay his claim for change. Forgoing both the methodology and the absolute end of blueprint utopianism, Halpin takes heed of the criticisms of utopia. He defines utopian realism as, “a form of speculative reflection about an ideal world” (Halpin, 2001a, p. 115). He also defines utopianism as offering “radical challenges to the status quo” and “out-of-the-ordinary prospective images”(Halpin, 2003a, p. 37; Halpin, 2007, p. 243). Yet it becomes clear through his own real-world example of utopian realism that there is an inconsistency between his theory and his practice. Halpin’s example involves thinking that can bring about specific changes based on perceptions of realistic social trends—in a section entitled, "Thinking experimentally about school leadership", Halpin (2003) points his critical lens at a Catholic school he’d visited and proceeds to imagine a preferable scenario that is far from radical (p.77). Halpin focuses in on the issue of leadership, and using utopian realism, he questions how teaching can be improved at this school. The outcome of this thought experiment is to think of a teachers as exhibiting, “enthusiasm, direction, effective communication, a ‘can-do’ approach, high expectations, humor,

respect for others, trust and willingness to delegate" (Webb, 2009, p.748). The output of utopian realism in this case certainly meets the first part of the definition relating to "speculative reflection about an ideal world" but expecting a teacher to exhibit "enthusiasm" is hardly the mark of a radical utopian theory.

The inability of Halpin's own example to fulfill the aims of his concept has to do, Webb (2009) argues, with the absence of a concrete vision in Halpin's theory:

> That utopian realism eschews such a detailed vision of the social whole is explained in large part by a fear of 'totalising' discourse and its associations with 'totalitarianism'. To construct a 'total' vision of an alternative society is to offer a 'blueprint', which then, so the logic goes, renders one complicit in a process of totalitarian coercion. But for Utopia to perform the functions ascribed to it by Halpin, a blueprint is required. (p.748-749)

This inability for iconoclastic theories to meet the high standards of utopianism does not stop at Giroux and Halpin. Hall's view also displays such shortcomings.

For Hall, the problem arises from the issue that changes in thought do not always become changes in the world. The idea that changes in thought precipitate desired changes in action or that theory necessarily leads to practice have not survived modern sociological inquiry. Positive thinking does not always beget positive action or positive results, despite the urging of many "McWorld" gurus. In fact, many argue that all this positive thinking keeps people from doing precisely what they intend to: enact real change. Through critical thinking, hope, the investigation of the pre-existing community projects and collective deliberation, Hall believes that the utopian aim of transforming the

dominant paradigm and its practices is feasible. The implication being that this formula can provoke major social change.

Hall is certainly clear on his disdain for the current global market utopian vision. His critique is strong and his strategy is clearly stated. Nonetheless, without a design proposal for some sort of actual change or the assertion of some sort of positive ideal, he diminishes the ability of such change to come to global fruition. Relying on community after community to potentially enact his formula may eventually result in some sort of change, but it this is clearly a less efficient utopian strategy. In fact, at best, it advances at the pace of any tinkering-towards-utopia style reform. It would seem that in the absence of a strong blueprint-utopianism style foundation, one of the few remaining active ingredients in an iconoclastic utopian recipe is hope.

This is not to deny its usefulness entirely. Iconoclastic utopianism might serve to catalyze critical thinking and public deliberation, as well as allow for diverse groups of students to empathize with one another. If successful, this exercise will undoubtedly have positive social repercussions. In theory, it can solve the finite problems to which it is applied. In a closed and directed effort, the aim is clearly defined and the expectations are limited. The use of a utopian thought process to accomplish a finite and predefined goal, in this case, facilitating cross-cultural communication, is a feasible one, and one that can be replicated for an innumerable number of local problems with finite goals. This is one way utopianism can become a method rather than a goal, as Ruth Levitas (2010) has argued.

Yet there is still something unsatisfying about this modest vision. The original

utopian impulse is one that compels people to critique the status quo, formulate ideals, and strategize for change. Utopian blueprints offer step-by-step instructions as to how to arrive at the ideal state—an explanation of how the change will take place, a description of the end-state, and a description of how the achieved ideals should manifest themselves in the structure of society. Iconoclastic utopianism involves objecting to the current state of affairs and using objections and ideals to incite change, but offers no distinct plan, no universal set of ideals or projection of the best possible world. Iconoclastic utopianism picks up from where the world is and tries to improve it.

Iconoclastic utopianism rests on possibility. This structure is open, inclusive, and inoffensive—the postmodern dream. The qualities are undoubtedly of great value to any liberal-democratic, pluralist society. As such, iconoclastic utopianism may serve a purpose for society, but let us not pretend it fills the same shoes as blueprints. In managing to satisfy critics, iconoclasts dismiss the value of asserting universal ideals and envisioning a world that embodies them. Iconoclastic utopianism, as Halpin, Giroux, and Hall have elaborated it, makes no more radical demand than reformists do.

The fact remains, however, that the iconoclast's criticisms of blueprint utopianism are valid. Without proper management, as the critics argue, such efforts can turn dystopian. Abandoning strong ideals, however, is no more the solution to preventing dystopia than abandoning hope is the solution to preventing disappointment. Excessive idealism can indeed be a risk if put into practice without proper precaution and attention to reality. Blueprints also require we wipe our sociological and contextual slates clean and plan with no regard for history. This, in my view, is the blueprint's most detrimental

feature. In failing to give proper credit to context, the blueprint neglects the wisdom that history, knowledge and experience can bring to new formulations. In addition, without due regard for history and present contexts, blueprints err on the side of being irrelevant and out of touch with the evolving needs and desires of people. To be clear, the direction I believe utopianism needs to go in is not back to exclusive reliance on blueprints.

Iconoclastic utopianism can serve a valuable social purpose, but it fails to maximize the original potential of utopianism and one that is still dear to many a utopian theorist. If education limits its utopian inquiries to the purview of the iconoclastic framework, than I fear that we will never overcome the doubt that I expressed at the outset of this thesis about whether education can really transform society. Insofar as iconoclastic utopianism holds imagining above planning and holds temporary, local needs above universal ones, utopianism will continue to disappoint.

The iconoclastic view should not be discarded altogether. Instead, it can be strengthened to have a greater transformative impact on society. This strengthening entails buttressing iconoclastic utopianism with a set of universal ideals. To do so requires taking what is, for some, a controversial ethical and methodological step. It is, however, one that I believe will bring us closer to making the ambitious social transformations necessary to truly stave off the ills of globalization. It is this strengthening that I explore in the following section, though only very briefly. I do hope to eventually elaborate on this new direction at greater length in future work.

Considerations for a New Direction for Utopianism

In this section, I will offer only a brief indication as to the direction I believe utopianism needs to start heading in if it is to live up to its purpose. This exploration requires a much more in-depth look, but I would like to at least intimate at its structure here. First, I will argue that utopian theory needs universalism if it is to optimize its potential for social transformation. Second, I will refer to Martha Nussbaum's capabilities approach in order to demonstrate that there is a compelling and recent case already being made for particular universal ideals. Lastly, I will discuss the utopian strategy I believe to be worthy of further educational exploration—namely, a two-tiered utopian approach. This approach uses a foundation of universal ideals to strengthen the iconoclastic utopian formula for social transformation.

Why Utopian Theory Needs Universalism

The desire to overcome criticisms of utopia and avoid dystopian outcomes has resulted in a diluted and substantially weaker utopianism: iconoclastic utopianism. This alternative offers no universal ideals or prescriptions for arriving at utopian society as blueprints did, ridding utopianism of its most radical and transformative ingredients. Webb (2009) echoes this sentiment when he explains:

> At the same time, however, educationalists are wary of approaches to policy and pedagogy that are naïve and fanciful or rigidly doctrinaire and potentially coercive. Because of a lingering suspicion that utopianism can be all of these things, the rehabilitation of Utopia within educational studies has been cautious

> and restrained. In particular, those striving to revitalize the spirit of Utopia have sought to avoid offering 'totalistic' blueprints and advocating prescriptive 'closure'. (p.755-756)

The aim of utopian theory as a formula for transforming society becomes an increasingly distant objective when universal ideals are eschewed. As Webb (2009) argues:

> much of the vitality, power and direction that a utopian approach can offer has been lost as a consequence of the perceived need to circumvent its 'bad' connotations...if Utopia is to perform the functions ascribed to it then a holistic vision imbued with prescriptive content is necessary. Without these, the concept of utopia becomes emaciated. (p.756)

This becomes evident in the cases of Halpin and Giroux. Although it is more radical in terms of the critique that it claims to offer, Halpin's utopian realism is, in many respects, practically indistinguishable from the kind of piecemeal approach preferred by Tyack and Cuban. Likewise, Giroux's utopianism "threatens to get lost in an endless romanticisation of the student voice" (Webb, 2009, p.756). The outcome of reflection and discussion are a far stretch from that of planning, preparing and acting. Relying on utopian change to result from collective thought and good will is "utopian", in the pejorative sense of the word. In each of the cases of iconoclastic utopianism that I have discussed above, be it that of Halpin, Giroux, or Hall, "the concept of utopia takes as an end what a more substantive understanding of the concept would regard as a means" (Webb, 2009, p.756). For example, for Giroux, deliberation is an end, whereas in the case of Plato's utopian theory, it was a means to the greater ideal of Justice. Iconoclastic utopianism, in many

ways, justifies the popular connotation of “utopian” as a far-off dream. Without real tactics, plans for action, and assertive ideals, all that is left is hope. True, hope is a much-needed psychological resource, but when it is not accompanied by plans and strategies for practical implementation, it becomes as ineffective as wishing.

If it is to actually achieve its grand aims, the direction utopianism needs to move in is toward strong values and bold visions. One way to construct utopian theories of this kind is to ground them in universal, irreducible principles, protecting utopianism from a debilitating intangibility. In much the same way that we protect democracies with constitutions, I postulate that we begin to explore protecting utopianism with a particular set of universal ideals. Affirming universal human values or ideals is a strategy that can justify hoping for real change, as it can allow for substantial steps toward a utopian society to be taken. Without concrete visions, Webb (2009) has argued that we are left with utopianism as an “open-ended process of imaginative exploration, a critical and heuristic device rather than a closed prescriptive goal to be realised through instrumental action” (p.756).

A utopianism built upon universal ideals has been problematic in the past but perhaps there are ideals that may pose less of a danger than others. I submit that Martha Nussbaum has articulated a list of capabilities that may serve as viable and safe ideals for future utopian theorizing.

Martha Nussbaum’s Universal Capabilities

If utopian theories are to begin incorporating universal ideals again, then I

propose that the one such viable set of ideals is that put forward by the human development ethics of Martha Nussbaum. This direction involves using a set of universal ideals to produce a society where every individual has an opportunity to fulfill their basic needs and flourish. Nussbaum's (2011) capabilities approach asserts a minimum-requirement of ideals in order to establish a dignified human existence for all. She (2011) also specifically demands that a minimum threshold the central capabilities be reached in order to claim a state of minimal justice. The capabilities approach is an interesting candidate for utopian ideals because it asserts universal ideals on the basis of basic human needs and human flourishing. These needs are established by virtue of an appeal to a cross-cultural sense of human dignity and provide a plurality of specified ideals rather than a singular, abstract ideal (such as Justice, for example). Affirming specified ideals can work to prevent the false interpretation of ideals, which has often been the cause of utopian perversion or dystopia.

In her latest articulation of the approach, Nussbaum enumerates the capabilities she believes are required for a dignified human life but does not claim to be offering a comprehensive list. These capabilities, I argue, can serve as universal ideals upon which a utopian theory maybe predicated; in fact, this would appear to be Nussbaum's intention for the approach. Nussbaum (2009) lists the central human capabilities on which human development is focused:

> life, bodily health, bodily integrity, the development of senses, imagination, and thought, the development of practical reason, emotional health, the opportunity to participate in meaningful and respectful relationships with others, both personal

> and political, the opportunity to have a good relationship to the environment and the world of nature, the chance to play and enjoy recreational activities, and finally, some specific types of control of property and one's working conditions. (p.11)

If these ideals were to be implemented, few could argue with the fact that this would a better world. Furthermore, with these human entitlements in place, Nussbaum (2009) can identify the role education is to play in securing them:

> It [education] must, first, promote the human development of its students. And it must, second, promote the students' understanding of the goals of human development for all, as goals inherent in the very idea of a decent minimally just society – in such a way that when they are empowered to make political choices, they will foster these capabilities for all, not only for themselves. So, in my version, such an education will begin from the idea of equal respect for all human beings and equal entitlement of all to a range of central human opportunities, not just in one's own nation, but everywhere in the world. (p.11)

Implementing the Capabilities Approach both requires education and advances the aims of most any ideal education. For example, ensuring equal respect for all human beings can certainly facilitate classroom dynamics, inter-student relations etc. Another of the Capabilities Approach's interesting implications for education is contained within the extended explanation of the fourth central capability:

> 4. Senses, Imagination, and Thought. Being able to use the senses, to imagine, think, and reason – and to do these things in a ''truly human'' way, a way

> informed and cultivated by an adequate education, including, but by no means limited to, literacy and basic mathematical and scientific training. Being able to use imagination and thought in connection with experiencing and producing works and events of one's own choice, religious, literary, musical, and so forth. Being able to use one's mind in ways protected by guarantees of freedom of expression with respect to both political and artistic speech, and freedom of religious exercise. Being able to have pleasurable experiences and to avoid nonbeneficial pain. (Nussbaum, 2003, p.41)

Here education is conceived of as a means to developing one of the central and necessary capabilities. From this and the former example, it can be inferred that the Capabilities Approach and education have a symbiotic relationship. Just as education can help implement and fortify the promises of the Nussbaum's approach, education, too, can benefit greatly from doing so.

Might such a view be conceived as containing the seeds of a utopian educational theory? Might realistic education ideals be derived from the central capabilities? What's clear, at this point, is that many interesting implications for education, beyond that which I have briefly referred to above, can be gathered from Nussbaum's principles. The potential for a utopian theory that includes universal principles, such as Nussbaum's, remains to be further explored.

Until such theories have been articulated and can stand on their own ground, a compromise is in order between iconoclasts and universalists. Thus far, a utopianism built upon universal ideals alone has not been well received by liberals, reformists and

postmodernists. However, perhaps there is some way to reconcile these competing theories into a single utopian theory for future education inquiry.

A Two-tiered Theory of Utopianism

I propose an alternative structure for utopian theories—one that combines both a set of universal ideals, such as Nussbaum's central capabilities, with an open and exploratory iconoclastic strategy. Universals establish a minimum-requirement for positive social transformation; they make a demand, whereas the iconoclastic strategy invites a conversation. Both of these strategies, I argue, need to be included in a strong utopian theory. Or, at the very least, an aggressive push for achieving the minimum thresholds of each capability, combined with the creativity of the iconoclastic strategy, is worthy of further consideration from philosophers of education.

The universal foundation of this combined utopian theory can act as an evaluative standard for education, and the iconoclastic overlay can act as a tool for considering yet additional improvements. The universal ideals or principles specified by Nussbaum are not an exhaustive list—ideally, additional minimum-requirement principles for a utopian society can be identified through iconoclastic means. For example, a combined theory might first assert the principle of gender-equality in education. In doing so, the principle should pervade educational policy, curriculum, resources (ie. textbooks), the professional development guidelines of educational workers etc. With this principle established and implemented, the iconoclastic tier serves to assess and improve the quality of the implementation of the principle and amend it if need be.

The layer of iconoclastic utopianism considers the voices of those affected by the principle and upon reflection and collective deliberation, additional principles can be asserted and existing principle can be perfected. The two-tiered or combined formula for educational utopia is meant to be equal parts assertive and contemplative.

Education, many would argue, is a necessary requirement for human flourishing. While Nussbaum's list is helpful in allowing me to articulate this structure for utopian theory, I use it here more as a viable example of what is possible rather than as *the* answer to our concerns in he field of education. Can a list of minimum-requirements such as the central capabilities be formulated to reflect our hopes for education? Certainly, without the capabilities on Nussbaum's list being met, it becomes difficult to imagine how one might flourish in an educational environment. In fact, Nussbaum (2011) assures us that as more capabilities begin to be identified by communities, she anticipates that education will be first among them:

> To some extent, the fertile capabilities will themselves be context-specific, but it's a good bet that in all nations education is one of them, providing access not only to employment options and political voice but also to greater bargaining power in the household, hence the power to stand up for oneself. (p.98)

Education is an opportunity that creates more opportunities. In this way, it would seem that a combined utopian advancement takes place not in the hard and fast manner of implementing a blueprint, nor in the long and slow revolution of the iconoclastic strategy, but as a progressive and steadfast unfolding.

I have encountered few educators who have not bemoaned the passing of the

Millennium Development Goals deadline. The Education For All goals are now a hugely motivating factor for petitioning for more aggressive strategies for transformation. This is not to overlook or belittle what progress has been made toward them. Rather, it is to emphasize that time is of the essence. I take this opportunity to implore members of the educational community to direct their inquiries in the direction of more demanding strategies for change, as I offer here. If incorporating universalism into a utopian theory of education can be viable and effective way of making ideals a reality then pragmatically, it is a timely risk to take.

Concluding Remarks

The reasons for which critics argue that we should not be offering strong utopian theories involves the historically grounded fear of totalitarianism, the claim of inefficiency and the postmodern fear of universalism. As a result, iconoclastic utopianism has emerged as a contemporary alternative that allows for theorists to circumvent criticisms and still uphold a utopian theory. However, as I have shown, this version of utopia is much less ambitious. This is not to say that it does not make a noteworthy effort for societal improvement. Rather, it is to say that the horizon of transformative achievement possible under iconoclastic utopianism is weakened by its refusal to assert universal ideals. I do not recommend we return to formulating blueprints. They recklessly abandoned social contexts and they affirmed the political ideals of authoritarians. Instead, I suggest that we begin to think in terms of a two-tiered utopianism. This utopianism consists of a universalist foundation made up of ideals that I propose be derived from

Martha Nussbaum's account of human functioning, with an overlay of iconoclastic utopianism. Such a theory makes a forceful plea for social transformation. It also necessitates collective and contextually relevant deliberation in order to sustain forward movement toward utopia.

From this, it may be gathered that the vision of utopia I point to here is at the very least a society where each individual has a strong framework in which to flourish. This might not sound like the ambitious utopian visions of the past, but it would seem that we live in a world where this kind of justice is nearly as distant as perfection. To deem this utopian vision a "pie-in-the-sky" variety would be to instantiate an all-new pessimistic low—the impossibility of justice.

If an ideal education is one where each student has a strong social and educational framework in which to flourish, then it is time that we, in education, consider formulating our own ideals that might enable this opportunity. If there is one thing that Halpin, Giroux, and Hall are all right about, it is that we in the field of education need to think of it as our responsibility and central purpose to construct a system whereby each student, adult or child has a good context in which to flourish.

References

Arendt, H. (1973). The origins of totalitarianism. New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich.

Bennett, O. (2001). Cultural pessimism: narratives of decline in the postmodern world. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Berlin, I. (1969). Four essays on liberty. London; New York [etc.: Oxford University P.

Berlin, I. (1990). On the pursuit of the ideal. The crooked timber of humanity: Chpaters in the history of ideas. London: John Murray.

Berlin, I., & Hardy, H. (1980). Against the current: essays in the history of ideas. New York: Viking Press.

Berlin, I., & Hardy, H. (1997). The crooked timber of humanity: chapters in the history of ideas. Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press.

Berlin, I., Hardy, H., & Kelly, A. (1978). Russian thinkers. London; New York, N.Y.: Penguin Books.

Bloch, E. (1986). Natural law and human dignity. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press.

Bloch, E. (2000). The spirit of Utopia. Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press.

Butler, C. (2002). Postmodernism: a very short introduction. Oxford; New York: Oxford University Press.

Cioran, E. M. (1987). History and utopia. New York: Seaver Books: Distributed by H. Holt.

Fisher, R. (1963). Classical Utopian Theories of Education. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.

Garrard, G. (1997). The counter-enlightenment liberalism of Isaiah Berlin. Journal of Political Ideologies, 2(3), 281–296.

Giroux, H. (2001). “Something’s Missing”: Cultural Studies, Neoliberalism, and the Politics of Educated Hope. Strategies: Journal of Theory, Culture & Politics, 14(2), 227–252.

Giroux, H. (2003). Utopian Thinking Under the Sign of Neoliberalism: Towards a Critical Pedagogy of Educated Hope. Democracy & Nature, 9(1), 91–105.

Giroux, H. (2006). Dystopian nightmares and educated hopes: the return of the pedagogical and the promise of democracy. Edutopias : new utopian thinking in education. Rotterdam; Taipei: Sense Publishers.

Giroux, H. (2007). Utopian thinking in dangerous times: Critical pedagogy and the project of educated hope. Utopian pedagogy: radical experiments against neoliberal globalization. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.

Goodwin, B., & Taylor, K. (2009). The politics of utopia: a study in theory and practice. New York: Peter Lang.

Gramsci, A. (1978). Selections from the prison notebooks of Antonio Gramsci. New York: International Publishers.

Greven, P. J. (1973). Child-rearing Concepts, 1628-1861: London: F.E. Peacock Publishers.

Hall, B. L. (2009). The Right to a New Utopia: Adult Learning and the Changing World of Work in an Era of Global Capitalism. In R. Maclean & D. Wilson (Eds.), International Handbook of Education for the Changing World of Work (pp. 97–

110). Dordrecht: Springer Netherlands.

Hall, B. L., & Turray, T. (2005). A review of the state of the field of adult learning: social movement learning. Ottawa, Ontario: Canadian Council on Learning.

Halpin, D. (1999). Utopian realism and a new politics of education: developing a critical theory without guarantees. Journal of Education Policy, 14(4), 345–361.

Halpin, D. (2003). Hope and education: the role of the utopian imagination. London: Routledge/Falmer.

Halpin, D. (2007). Utopian Spaces of "Robust Hope": The architecture and nature of progressive learning environments. Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education, 35(3), 243–255.

Hayek, F. A. von. (1994). The road to serfdom. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hayek, F. A. von, Klein, P. G., Bartley, W. W., Kresge, S., Wenar, L., Caldwell, B., & White, L. H. (1989). The collected works of F.A. Hayek. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Hayes, C. (2009). Popper, Hayek and the open society. London; New York: Routledge.

Hobbes, T., & Macpherson, C. B. (1986). Leviathan. Harmondsworth, Eng.: Penguin.

Israel, J. I. (2011). Democratic enlightenment: philosophy, revolution, and human rights 1750-1790. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Jacoby, R. (1999). The end of utopia: politics and culture in an age of apathy. New York: Basic Books.

Jacoby, R. (2007). Picture imperfect: utopian thought for an anti-utopian age. New York; Chichester: Columbia University Press.

Kateb, G. (1972). Utopia and its enemies. New York: Schocken Books.

Kenny, A. (2006). A new history of western philosophy Vol. III, The rise of modern philosophy. Oxford; Oxford; New York: Clarendon Press; Oxford University press.

Kumar, K. (1991). Utopianism. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Levitas, R. (2010a). The concept of Utopia. Oxford; New York: Peter Lang.

Levitas, R. (2010b). Back to the future: Wells, sociology, utopia and method. The Sociological Review, 58(4), 530–547.

Lorence, B. W. (1974). Parents and children in eighteenth-century Europe. Journal of Psychohistory, 2(1), 1–30.

Lyotard, J.-F. (1999). The postmodern condition: a report on knowledge. Minnesota, Minn.: University of Minnesota Press.

Maimonides, M. (1956). The Guide for the Perplexed. London: Routledge & Sons.

Mckay, J. P. (2002). History of western society since 1300. [S.l.]: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt.

McQuaig, L. (1999). The cult of impotence: selling the myth of powerlessness in the global economy. Toronto: Penguin.

Melchert, N. (1995). The great conversation: a historical introduction to philosophy. Mountain View, Calif.: Mayfield Pub. Co.

Nagle, D. B. (2002). The ancient world: a social and cultural history. Upper Saddle River, N.J.: Prentice Hall.

Nussbaum, M. (1999). Women and equality: The capabilities approach. International

Labour Review, *138*(3), 227–245.

Nussbaum, M. (2003). Capabilities as fundamental entitlements: Sen and Social justice. Feminist Economics, 9(2-3), 33–59.

Nussbaum, M. (2009). Education for profit, education for freedom. Liberal Education.

Nussbaum, M. C. (2011). Creating capabilities: the human development approach. Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press.

Olssen, M. (2006). Totalitarianism and the "Repressed" Utopia of the Present: Moving beyond Hayek, Popper and Foucault. Edutopias: new utopian thinking in education (pp. 99–124). Rotterdam; Taipei: Sense Publishers.

Peters, M., & Freeman-Moir, D. J. (2006). Edutopias: new utopian thinking in education. Rotterdam; Taipei: Sense Publishers.

Peters, M., & Marshall, J. (1996). Individualism and community: education and social policy in the postmodern condition. London; Washington, D.C.: Falmer Press.

Plato, & Lee, H. D. P. (1987). The Republic. London: Penguin Books Ltd.

Popper, K. R. (2002a). The open society and its enemies. London: Routledge.

Popper, K. R. (2002b). The poverty of historicism. London: Routledge.

Rousseau, J.-J. (1993). Emile. London; Rutland, Vt.: J.M. Dent; C.E. Tuttle.

Rousseau, J.-J. (2011). Discourse on the origin and foundations of inequality among men. New York, NY: Bedford/St. Martins.

Rousseau, J.-J., & Gourevitch, V. (1997). The social contract and other later political writings. Cambridge, U.K.; New York, NY, USA: Cambridge University Press.

Sargisson, L. (1996). Contemporary feminist utopianism. London; New York: Routledge.

Schaprio, Leonard. (1972). Totalitarianism. London: Pall Mall Press.

Sciabarra, C. M. (1995). Marx, Hayek, and utopia. Albany: State University of New York Press.

Smith, M. R., & Marx, L. (1994). Does technology drive history?: the dilemma of technological determinism: Workshop: Selected papers. Cambridge, MA; London: MIT Press.

Thucydides, & Lattimore, S. (1998). The Peloponnesian War. Indianapolis: Hackett Pub. Co.

Tyack, D. B., & Cuban, L. (1996). Tinkering toward utopia: a century of public school reform. Cambridge, Mass. [u.a.]: Harvard Univ. Press.

Webb, D. (2009). Where's the vision? The concept of utopia in contemporary educational theory. Oxford Review of Education, 35(6), 743–760.

Williams, R. (1961). The long revolution. New York: Columbia University Press.