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THE FUNCTION OF FAITH: THEOLOGICAL CONSTITUENTS IN
PROCESSUAL UTOPIAN METHODOLOGY

Historicism contents itself with establishing a casual nexus
among various moments in history. […] The historian who
proceeds from this consideration ceases to tell the sequence of
events like the beads of the rosary. He grasps the constellation
into which his own era has entered, along with a very specific
earlier one. *Thus he establishes a conception of the present as
now-time shot through with splinters of messianic time.*

We know that the Jews were prohibited from inquiring into the
future: The Torah and the prayers instructed them in
remembrance. […] This does not imply, however, that for the
Jews the future became homogenous, empty time. *For every
second was the small gateway in time through which the Messiah might
enter.*

- Walter Benjamin[1]

Introduction[2]

Religion is experiencing a comeback, especially within proposals
concerned with more just societies. This renewed interest in
mystical logics can be seen, as one example, in recent theories of
'processual utopia.'[3] In fact, theological concepts saturate this

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[1] *On the Concept of History,* (1940 unpublished manuscript, translated by D.
Redmond), XVII, A-B, emphases mine.

[3] Perhaps the most prolific contemporary defender of processual utopia is Ruth
Levitas. See her "Marxism, Romanticism, and Utopia: Ernst Bloch and William
Morris," *Radical Philosophy*, 51 (1989), 27-36; *The Concept of Utopia*. (Syracuse:
Syracuse University Press, 1990); "The Elusive Idea of Utopia," *History of the Human
Sciences*, 16:1 (2003), 1-10; *Utopia as Method: The Imaginary Reconstitution of Society*,
(UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013); and "Where there is no vision, the people perish: A
utopian ethic for a transformed future," *Centre for the Understanding of Sustainable
Property*, online (2017) URL: http://cusp.ac.uk/essay/m1-5/ as examples of what
she calls an 'education of desire.' She argues that utopian hope's defining
characteristic is its function. This is just to say that it supplies a methodology for
utopia. According to her, this function displays four separate aspects: 1) a cognitive
function as a mode of constructive reason (i.e. a mode of rationality), 2) an educative

variant of the literature, specifically those concentrating on an emplacement of utopian *longing* within human materiality.[4] These accounts also refuse to describe, in a fine-grained way, what the telos of utopia either is or should be.

To explain what is meant here by 'processual utopia,' attempts to envision utopias fall roughly into two categories. The first of these propose variants of social or political ideal societies, to include depictions of how they might look or function within a range of socio-political milieu.[5] These are importantly not limited to antiquated or classical accounts. There is an active debate about the achievability of descriptive utopias among both philosophers and political scientists. The former tend to focus on the ways in which ethical theories influence possible utopian constructions (that is to say, maximize social justice). The latter concentrate on the socio-political conditions that either help or hinder utopian experimentation, to include diverse descriptions of what those attempts might look like.[6]

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function as a *mythography* which instructs will and desire, 3) an anticipatory function recognized within a future orientation towards possibilities which later become actual, and 4) a causal function *that acts as an agent for historical change*. ("Marxism, Romanticism, and Utopia: Ernst Bloch and William Morris", 29, emphases mine). See also Nora Rismal in "The Ends of Utopian Thinking: Marx, Adorno, Bloch," unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Cambridge, Robinson College, (2017) for an analysis of processual valences within the utopian thought of Theodor Adorno and Ernst Bloch.

[4] Political theory's reliance on religious logics is not exclusive to utopian projects. They also form the basis for socio-political normative structures more generally. For a canonical account of how political structures function as 'god' vis-à-vis ethical comportment its suspension, see Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapters on the Concept of Sovereignty*, G. Schwab translation, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005).

[5] In other words, they attempt to construct 'currently achievable' utopias. Examples range from More, Thomas, Saint, J. H Lupton, and Ralph Robinson. *The Utopia of Sir Thomas More: in Latin from the edition of March , and in English from the 1st ed. of Ralph Robynson's translation in 1551*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1895) URL: https://www.loc.gov/item/01005877/, to Charles Fourier, *Design for Utopia: Selected Writings*. Studies in the Libertarian and Utopian Tradition, (New York: Schocken, 1971), and Henri de Saint-Simon, *Du systéme industriel,* (1822 periodical). These include attempts to concretely instantiate social utopias, which cover such events as the Paris Commune (in 1871) and the Owenite communities (1825-1827). However, for an analysis of the ways in which the revolution and brief social democracy of the Paris Commune have informed utopian imaginaries within the genre I refer to as processual utopia, see Kristin Ross, *Communal Luxury: The Political Imaginary of the Paris Commune*, (London: Verso Press, 2015). Gerald Gaus, in *The Tyranny of the Ideal: Justice in a Diverse Society*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2016) examines the Owenite experiment (among others) as part of his investigation into a practical way to implement achievable (for him, non-ideal) social utopias. For Ernst Bloch's take on this type of utopia, see *The Principle of Hope*, Vols. 1-3, (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1995 ed.), 471-619 in which he refers to them as 'scientific' or 'rational.' The latter term is, I think, unfortunate, as he also argues that utopian hope reclaims rationalism from Enlightenment-based politico-economic (i.e., capitalistic) logics.

[6] For examples of non-ideal social justice theories in the context of ethical constructivism, see John Rawls, *A Theory of Justice*, (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1971): Amartya Sen, *The Idea of Justice*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press,

The second broad genre of utopian theory falls into what I noted at the outset, namely: processual accounts. This isn't a precise term, yet it picks out a characteristic dynamic of ongoing movement within them, emphasizing a state of *becoming* as central to their operationalization. This perspective claims that utopia should be considered a verb rather than a destination. It therefore focuses on an affectively-oriented, practical stance looking towards the future yet grounded in the past-within-present of what Walter Benjamin calls the "recognizability of the now."[7] This idea can be described as an individual-become-collective process of hope focused on rupturing crystallized histories and making possible what Ernst Bloch calls the utopian 'novum' realizable in the future.[8] Indeed, this idea of utopian hope can be described as a specific affective stance informing personal and corporate performativity in the 'now' yet aimed at making a better 'not yet' possible. It is, for Bloch, Levitas, and others, utopia's methodological foundation.

In this paper, I argue that both the conceptual framework and function of religious faith have been reincarnated (better, appropriated), for Bloch and those who have followed him, as the utopian methodology of hope. In such accounts, messianic, indeed eschatological, narratives serve as vehicles for their explanation and deployment. This is due to at least two primary catalysts. The first is a liberation from a need to describe, with any problematic granularity, what the teli of these accounts looks like. 'Golden streets' and 'cities descending from heaven' aside, an unfixed novum situates the aesthetic and ethical foci of utopia firmly in the 'now' and referenced to comportment instead of destination.

Secondly, the move to a language of faith, rechristened as hope, places these theories in opposition to what has not worked. The Enlightenment-cum-capitalistic grand experiment has ended in the deification of images, in the consecration of idols that, while powerful, are merely constructions fed by subjects' worship at

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2009); and Gerald Gaus, his 2016 and *The Open Society and Its Complexities*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021). For an ideal-theory account of social justice (concentrating on the characterization of morality within a social justice framework), see David Estlund, "Utopophobia," *Philosophy and Public Affairs*, 42 vol. 2 (2014), 113-134. For socio-political proposals concerning the juxtaposition of political and social theory vis-à-vis the achievability of social utopias, see Erik Wright, *Envisioning Real Utopias*. (East Peoria: Verso Press, 2010) and Michael Gordin, Helen Tilley & Gyan Prakash, eds., *Utopia/Dystopia: Conditions of Historical Possibility,* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010).

[7] For an analysis of how this phrase explains Benjamin's thoughts on utopia, see Miguel Abensour, *Utopia from Thomas More to Walter Benjamin,* translated by R. MacKenzie, (Minneapolis: Univocal, 2017), 64-85.

[8] *The Principle of Hope*, throughout.

altars that then resanctify them. Processual accounts, in their
efforts to problematize linear, crystallized narratives necessary
for the existence of extant normative structures, challenge these
latter for the wreath of human rationalism.[9] A return to a
religious or mystical conceptual framework thus confronts
currently-reigning, post-Enlightenment rationalism on, ironically,
firm ontological and epistemological grounds. As I demonstrate
below, Ernst Bloch, perhaps the seminal scholar of processual
utopia, argues for a reclamation of the role of emotions/passion
in the 'what is' of empirical inquiry.[10] For him (and others, more
in what follows) rationalism is not mere objectivity.

Processual proposals do not, importantly, confront a
socio-political proposal with a competing socio-political
proposal; they oppose boundaries on what 'exists,' those normed
by the status quo, in the hopes of making new possibilities
available in the future. Significantly, these possibilities might not
involve: 1) something we can currently imagine, and 2) an 'us' in
the sense that we recognize it today. These accounts are
fascinatingly shot through with religious, sometimes even
chiliastic, language. Post-Enlightenment rationalism excised the
mystical from the 'sciences.' It then appropriated its concepts,
baptized with new names and presented in new vestments, and
embedded them functionally within simulated images enfleshing
political hegemonies.[11] A return to a more metaphysical field of
play by efforts to challenge the socio-political simulacra
consecrated within these narratives of progress is one that might
have been anticipated. To describe this phenomenon using
religious imagery, false gods, created as idols and worshiped
within an always-recreated status quo, remain at the same time
uniquely vulnerable to the Absolute existing in a possible reality
(as the result of processual utopian struggle) even if that
end-state remains uncognizable in a concrete form to those
'battling' for it.

Modern narratives rely on a reification of emergence in order to
freeze the past in a solidified present interpreted within rubrics of

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[9] Jean Baudrillard in *Simulacra and Simulation*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan
Press, 1983) and *The Perfect Crime*, (London: Verso Press, 1996) calls these spheres of
normative hegemony *simulacra*. They are simulations of the 'real,' aligning with
Schmitt's (2005 ed.) analysis of the role and function accruing to political power
structures (or, for Schmitt, the 'king'). Their existence stems from their continual
recreation as a result of subjects *believing in them*. The affinity of this relationship
with the concept of religious faith seems obvious.
[10] Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 65-174.
[11] See Schmitt (2005 ed.) as well as Baudrillard (1983 and 1996) for accounts
explaining the religious valences inherent in political theory, especially following the
Aufklärung. This appropriation is evident within critical post-Enlightenment thought
as well. I address this affinity in my conclusion.

progress-cum-rationality. This imagery recalls Benjamin's crystallized catastrophe that must be shattered to allow different ontologies to be recognized.[12] And in a new, anti-modern recognition of an expanded set of ontological existences, it unsurprisingly turns out that God, as a necessarily robust metaphysical functionary, must be 'uncrossed' out.[13] Logics sustaining liquified, processual visions of utopia thus lend themselves to mystical formulations. It is no accident that Bloch refers to the utopian impulse as the "trace of the Absolute."[14]

Processually-based critiques of modern narratives championing 'progress,' even within social justice initiatives leveraging utopian terminology, thus find themselves naturally trading in religious terminology and concepts.[15] In what follows, I examine the way in which religious mechanisms clarify theories of processual utopia, both generatively and functionally.

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[12] *On the Concept of History*, Thesis X.

[13] Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, translated by C. Porter, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), 142.

[14] *The Principle of Hope*, throughout.

[15] An analogue to this analysis can be found in Bruno Latour's *We Have Never Been Modern*, specifically his critique of the western idea of being 'modern.' Modernity requires that reality be bifurcated into two poles – those of nature and society. Rationally scientific analyses, to be modern, must fully identify the subject (qua subject) as belonging to one (and only one) of these. The results of 'true' scientific inquiry must be pure; they must be untainted by hybridity. (32)

This 'modern constitution' guaranteed several things, two of which are salient to my investigation. The first is that we construct nature but grant it the status of immanence. It is 'as if' we did not construct it. This applies equally (in a reversed way) to the pole of society. It is granted the status of transcendence, surpassing us infinitely. At the same time, when considered alongside the poles of nature, it is our own free construction; it is as if we *did* construct it. In the case of the prevailing normative simulacrum the socio-political machine doesn't then exist. It is both immanent and transcendent – the personification of both contradictions Latour unmasks. Hobbes' *Leviathan* becomes both society *and* nature, changing identities as often as necessary to survive – *all the while existing only in the form of an image*, an idol of the linear conception of history-cum-progress fundamental to modernity. Thus modern rationalism relies on the phenomenon of 'emergence.' Progress must arrive fully formed, it cannot be allowed hybrid states of being. (70)

The second aspect of this modern constitution salient to my project is what Latour calls the 'fourth guarantee'. This is required by the intentional contradictions of the previous three. To arbitrate these inconsistencies, modernity needs a God, but one that is 'crossed out.' No one purporting to be modern could mix that God with nature's (or society's) function. The deity can't interfere; it can only explain by way of negative inference the incoherence embodied by the purified poles of existence. (32-35)

The consequence of modern philosophy was that it denied the existence of hybrid entities between the poles. It isn't as if modernity couldn't accept them as conceptually available for description, it just couldn't accept them as existing *per se*. They became intermediaries as opposed to mediators. They weren't allowed to be 'things-in-themselves'. (55-67) The problem, of course, is the inability of those purified poles of nature and society to provide the explanatory efficacy required to mask these 'quasi-objects'. It turns out that the hybridized existences between them aren't simply indicatory references. They must be treated as referents on their own terms. And this, according to Latour, requires that God be 'uncrossed out.' (142)

Specifically, I suggest that their methodology for utopian effort, referred to as utopian *hope*, is equivalent to religious faith.   I begin by analyzing Søren Kierkegaard's three stages of human development. This will help clarify what is meant by 'faith' in this context and how it is deployed within utopian proposals. This will also explain what I have said in the previous, lengthy footnote about the forced purification of subject-object identification and function. Kierkegaard defends the superiority of subjective 'truth,' as opposed to objective truth, which aligns with the refusal of processual theories to concretize their teli's contours. I then revisit the concept of Blochian hope with this lens, illuminating the functional appropriation of faith within it. Following this, I turn to St. Augustine's discussion of faith throughout his account of the *Civitas Dei*. It turns out that Bloch's instrumental positioning of hope (located for him within the materiality of human consciousness) relies on St. Augustine's earlier concepts. In my conclusion, I bring these together to show that processual accounts depend methodologically on metaphysical constituents and a delinearization of history within the context of utopian function.

Kierkegaard's "Knight of Faith"

But the definition of truth stated above is a paraphrasing of faith. Without risk, no faith. Faith is the contradiction between the infinite passion of inwardness and the objective uncertainty. If I am able to apprehend God objectively, I do not have faith; but because I cannot do this, I must have faith. If I want to keep myself in faith, I must continually see to it that I hold fast the objective uncertainty, see to it that […] I am 'out on 70,000 fathoms of water' and still have faith.

- Søren Kierkegaard[16]

What is faith? The writer of Hebrews calls it "the *substance* of things hoped for, the *evidence* of things not seen."[17] What interests me here is its ontological and epistemological status. It is situated as substance (ὑπὸστασις), or *upostasis*. This means, of course, 'substance,' but it also refers to 'steadiness' or 'support'. This is to say it is a *solidification* of hope. It stands in relations to things which are not ascertained to the senses as evidence (ἔλεγχος), or *elenchos*, which more specifically indicates

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[16] *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, originally published in 1846, translated by E. Hong and H. Hong within *The Essential Kierkegaard*, (New York: Princeton University Press, 2000), VII, 171.
[17] *The Holy Bible*, English Standard Version, (Crossway Press, 2011 edition), Hebrews 11:1, emphases mine.

something stronger than evidence: namely, a proof. Faith, then, has both an ontological status and role as well as an epistemological function. It is the signifier as well as the proof of existence for the signified. It grounds religion's referents and methodology.

This raises more questions. What does it solidify? If hope is construed as a positive conative stance towards something that might come to pass, then faith can be positioned as the concretization of that affective stance. At the same time, it purportedly provides a proof for things not accessible by normal sensory perception. As such, it grants epistemological warrant for belief in these existences. This may seem worryingly stipulative to a philosopher and not definitive enough to an evangelical. Still, let's see what happens when adding a temporality operator to the secondary phrase.

If the writer of Hebrews is providing a historical narrative of personalities known for their faith, then it seems also correct to situate the epistemological claim as a temporal one. Faith becomes the evidence of things not seen *at that/this time*. It is thus essentially situated as anticipatory within history, a reference to a 'not-yet' with an ontological and epistemological functionality in the past-become-present. With this temporal fluidity in mind, I now turn to the 'Knight of Faith' within Kierkegaard's writing. What are the defining characteristics of this individual, and how do they relate to humankind more broadly?

For Kierkegaard, to develop fully humans need to pass through three phases: the aesthetic, the ethical, and the religious.[18] He does not, notably, construe the final phase as being uniquely Christian, even if the grist for his mill is a query about how to become one.[19] Yet before he introduces these phases, he pauses for a discussion of what he refers to as 'recollection.' This is something he sets over and against remembering, in the form of merely recalling names and dates. What he means by recollection is fascinatingly 'ideality,' a conception of existence *as eternality*.[20] It is the recognition of an eschatological continuity of life coupled with a separation of what is essential from what is trivial (his words). He specifically situates it as a term of art, an ability to "conjure away the present for the sake of recollection."[21] The effort expended in the reflection necessary is to 'redeem for

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[18] In his *Stages on Life's Way*, (originally published in 1845), translated by Hong, E. and Hong, H. within *The Essential Kierkegaard*, (New York: Princeton University Press, 2000), VI, 443.
[19] Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, VII, 484-498.
[20] Ibid, VII, 16-18.
[21] Ibid, VI, 19.

recollection' something once experienced.[22] It is a separation of 'what is remembered' from 'what is worthy of being remembered.'

His first sphere of development is aesthetic; it operates temporally in what he terms 'the immediate.' It is not a sphere of reflection or recollection, but one of action and reaction. The final sphere is that of religion, or fulfillment (but not in some 'rags to riches' way). Connecting them is the sphere of the ethical. This is a conduit – a passageway from the aesthetic to the religious – and importantly, he describes it as "the impulse of the motion."[23] It signifies the difference between the first and final phases as being an external or internal vector of development. Significantly, passage through these phases, *as a process*, is important, and this is emphasized by his description of those who attempt an immediate shift from one phase to the next (or even to skip a phase). Doing this short-circuits the reflection/recollection required and results in a "positive doctrine of obligation" or religion becoming "poetry, history."[24] In short, these grandiose epitomizations of movement from one sphere to the next emphasize externality instead of a necessary internal focus. In evangelical language this might recall the phenomena of 'prosperity gospels' with no doctrinal constituent of 'repentance.'[25] The emphasis must be on ever-increasing self-reflection, a prioritization of internal over external *foci*.

This grounds what Kierkegaard argues is the primacy of subjective (vs. objective) truth. What becomes important is not what is said, but *how* it is said; this is not a discussion of a 'manner of speaking' but rather the relationship of the individual, existentially, to what is said. It becomes a heuristic for discovering (human-cum-religious) truth; it is a *methodology*

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[22] Ibid, VI, 21. Note the similarities between his anamnestic function with that of Walter Benjamin. For the latter, in *The Arcades Project*, translated by H. Eiland and K. McLaughlin, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), the objective of present observation is to discover the flash of 'recognition in the now' that connects with the what-has-been to smash the concretized forms ideological history takes (463-464, N3a,3 and elsewhere). This results in 'bringing the dialectic to a standstill' – what Kierkegaard is describing here. To underline the parallel nature of their thought, Kierkegaard continues after this section to analyze the function of fashion within communal historical mimesis. Benjamin also devotes a significant portion of his work to the analysis of fashion as a *fetish with death* in that it reifies the past in a cyclical fashion aligning itself with the bourgeoisie commodity fetish (62-81, 101-119 and 171-202).

[23] Kierkegaard, *Stages on Life's Way*, VI, 443.

[24] Ibid, VI, 452.

[25] Bloch's flash of the utopian spirit thus consists of more than 'feel good' visions. If there is work to be done, and all theories seem to agree in that assessment, it is possible that an attitude of repentance for past 'sins' (perhaps in the form of historic crystallizations protecting privilege) is even more appropriate to utopian hope than fantastical dream-imaginings.

coupled to an epistemological commitment. Ultimate truth, then, is reflected in a passion of and for the infinite. But since the infinite can only refer to the subjective, it is *only within subjectivity* we can find it. Thus:

> But precisely because the subject is existing, the 'how' that is subjectively emphasized is dialectical also with regard to time. In the moment of the decision of passion, where the road swings off from objective knowledge, it looks as if the infinite decisions were thereby finished. But at the same moment, the existing person is in the temporal realm, and the *subjective 'how' is transformed into a striving that is motivated and repeatedly refreshed by the decisive passion of the infinite, but it is nevertheless a striving.* [p] When subjectivity is truth, the definition of truth must also contain in itself an expression of the antithesis to objectivity, […], and this expression will at the same time indicate the resilience of the inwardness. Here is such a definition of truth: *An objective uncertainty, held fast through appropriation with the most passionate inwardness, is the truth*, the highest truth there is for an *existing* person.[26]

The issue discussed here is faith's function *as a methodology for fully developing as a human*, namely: a passion for the infinite realized within striving that has no objective grounding. His own footnote to this passage is, 'The reader will note that what is discussed here is essential truth, or the truth that is related essentially to existence, and that it is specifically in order to clarify it as inwardness or as subjectivity that the contrast is pointed out." In his words, truth is "*An objective uncertainty, held fast through appropriation with the most passionate inwardness, is the truth*, the highest truth there is for an existing person."[27]

Kierkegaard cashes this out as a paraphrase (his words) *of faith itself*. It is the contradiction between an infinite passion of inwardness and objective uncertainty. To have objective knowledge of the divine precludes faith; thus, to have faith means to "hold fast to objective uncertainty."[28] It is a risk that one must take to go beyond the external, to supersede the concretized aesthetic that consecrates itself as host with no need of divine transfiguration. This requires a resolute affective stance towards the Not-Yet involving a movement from possibility to actuality, yet at the same time it is action, a 'leap' that only the Knight of Faith makes.[29]

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[26] Ibid, VII, 168-170, emphases his.
[27] Ibid, emphasis his.
[28] Ibid, VII, 171.
[29] Ibid, VII, 297. This passage references Aristotle's *Physics*, 200, 201A.

To sum up, faith, for Kierkegaard, is a determined negation of objective certainty coupled with a passion for the infinite. It requires passing through three phases of human development: an immediate and aesthetic (external) sphere, an ethical passage in which an inward focus emphasizing one's own insufficiency develops (i.e., attitude of repentance), and a religious phase in which the leap of faith takes place. This entails a profound risk in that it casts us into the unknown such that [we are] "out on 70,000 fathoms of water" and still have faith.'[30]

In the next section, I use this working model and apply it to an analysis of Bloch's utopian hope. It turns out that they are at the least close analogues, if not actually synonyms, even if they cash out the object of their affective performativity differently.

Blochian Hope as Mystical Faith

Utopian hope, for Ernst Bloch and those who follow him, is more than a conative attitude that also carries imaginations pregnant with possible future content. It is something ontological within matter itself and instantiated in a unique relationship vis-à-vis human material existence. This is due to the unique makeup of the human being/consciousness and forms a functional part of our rationality as humans. This ability to investigate ourselves allows us to interrogate our existence and its corresponding conditions of possibility in order to critique them. Thus, we can question both who we are (as reflexivity about our identity and ontological status) and where we have been/are/might be going. To put this latter point differently, we can hold in tension the relative necessity of the past and the contingency of the future while grappling with the presence of both in 'the present.' Hope, for Bloch, depends on this multiplicity of temporal constituents that make up what he refers to as the Not-Yet-Conscious grounded in the 'now' (and its corresponding Real-Possible).[31]

The emphasis Bloch places on internal investigation mirrors Kierkegaard's position on the primacy of an internal perspective. This is placed into a material context, of hope within human consciousness, that parallels the ontological and epistemological function of faith given above. Recall that the ability to reflect/recollect is, for Kierkegaard, an intrinsic element of what it is to be an existing *person* once an individual makes a conscious choice to risk holding 'objective reality' in uncertainty.

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[30] Ibid, VII, 171.
[31] *The Principle of Hope*, 114-180.

To expand on this affinity, our ability to conduct self-analysis reveals something else Bloch finds central to utopian theory both in the individual and collective cases. This is what he refers to as 'the darkness,' an incomprehensible remainder to perception that is left over within all human experience, accomplishment, events, etc.[32] Another way to put this idea is that there is something missing upon close self-examination. This darkness forms a null in our core, recognized within reflective self-awareness. We somehow know there is something more, something closer to the Absolute, that is the culmination of utopian longing. Mentioned throughout his writing as an 'image-trace' running through our consciousnesses, he argues this can be found throughout aesthetic/artistic expression in various forms.[33] For Kierkegaard, this null in the center of human experience is the recognition that we are not yet reconciled to (for Bloch) the Absolute. It drives the internally focused and humble person, journeying through ethical self-reflection toward the religious sphere, *to repent*. It is an ongoing (Kierkegaard uses the word 'irony' for this phenomenology) ever-being-refined recognition of our lack of completion in the present. This absence indicates that there is potentially more – a Blochian Not-Yet-Conscious within future possibility.[34]

Utopian hope then is: 1) experientially both individual and collective, and 2) a consequence of the *metaphysical* makeup of human existence. It runs through the fiber of every human, no matter what her state circumstantially. Put differently, not to have this impulse, this trace of something missing, indicates that either we have arrived already at the Absolute, utopian state of existence, or *that we have lost an essential part of what it is to be human*. Kierkegaard would not situate faith as a material constituent within human consciousness; for him it is a choice one makes as part of a developmental process. Yet it still stands in a supporting relationship to the desire for the infinite. Like Bloch's hope, he describes faith as crucial to becoming fully human in that *only* an epistemology of faith, cultivated by developing fully through introspection, allows a person to situate herself accurately in a metaphysical sense.

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[32] Ibid, 180-186, 189-193.

[33] And displayed within various works of art and aesthetic performance (ibid, 178 and following). Bloch uses the terms 'image-trace' and 'flashes' indicating evidence of utopian impulse. He gives credit to St. Augustine as the first utopian theorist to identify this phenomenon in *The Spirit of Utopia*, (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2000 ed.), 195. Thus St. Augustine, *De Trinitate xii*, c.7, n.10: 'I am aware of something within me that gleams and flashes before my soul; were this perfected and fully established in me, that would surely be eternal life.'

[34] Kierkegaard, *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, VII, 436-440.

The objective of utopian hope is to ultimately remedy that lack in the center of human consciousness, even if it cannot concretely describe or imagine what human existence might look like once the Absolute is achieved. Faith's constant companion, as we have seen, is a steadfast desire in the infinite. Both hope's active affectivity and faith's determined passion should inform our performativity in everyday life (according to these writers). That this striving is cast as an *ethical* struggle for both of them is also clear. It is an ever-pending move from what is to what *should* be. The novum for Bloch and the infinite for Kierkegaard are just the summum bonum, the ultimate human good.[35] What 'reality' might look like as the Absolute or infinite might remain incomprehensible to current apprehension; indeed, it might not even involve an 'us' that is recognizable. It remains fleeting, a trace, a recognition of human frailty within historical loss and future possibility combined in present, pregnant tension.

As a result, and like Kierkegaard, Bloch's concept of a utopian impulse that functions within the material being of humankind demands its own requisite faith as the "essence of things hoped for," as a striving grounded in the "evidence of things not seen."[36] He refers to this as a recovery of uniquely human rationalism (against scientifically positivistic, Enlightenment logic).[37] The entailed subjective end-state, comprised within the 'things not seen' of faith qua hope, for both of them, is cashed out as an inverted mirror-image of one another. For Kierkegaard, the infinite represents man's ultimate reconciliation to God.[38] For Bloch, the novum is a culmination of humankind's assumption of that role; God disappears, no longer needed as the image of the Absolute for which humanity was always-already destined metaphysically.[39] The precisely inverted nature of these utopian destinations highlights the synonymy of their method. This is, recall, to act as a catalyst embodied within an affective orientation situated both temporally and substantively. Hope as faith, then, grounds a parallel methodology for both. It is the

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[35] Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 298-305.

[36] Hebrews 11:1 (*The Holy Bible*, ESV)

[37] Bloch, using the closing chapters of both *The Spirit of Utopia* and *The Principle of Hope*, situates Karl Marx as providing the theoretical and methodological geneses for a reclamation of utopian rationality – connecting Marxist economical-materialistic critique of capitalistic logics (reified as scientific rationalism) to utopian hope. See Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 1354-1376 and *The Spirit of Utopia*, 233-278 for this analysis.

[38] *Concluding Unscientific Postscript*, VII, 6-7. As noted earlier, the spheres of development are not referenced to a specifically Christian form; however, Kierkegaard demonstrates that logic underpinning faith as the vehicle to know the infinite entails a uniquely Christian reference to history and its teleology. This is directly tied into his bifurcation of the (objective) truth *of* Christianity over and against the (subjective) individual relationship of an individual *to* Christianity.

[39] *The Principle of Hope*, 310-313 and *The Spirit of Utopia*, 233-278.

subjective 'how' positioned over and against the objective 'what,' an emphasis on utopian process and a refusal to concretize its description.

Indeed, Bloch himself describes how utopian hope is equivalent to Augustinian faith (by quoting him). He claims that utopia performs a 'cosmic function' battling against misery, death, and what he calls the 'husk realm' of physical nature. This results in our (human) desire, as part of our rational materiality, to know God and the soul; and once the Absolute is found, new metaphysical contingencies can be made possible through the utopian function. Only then can a new type of life begin.[40] In fact, like Kierkegaard, he refers to the utopian Totum as the 'last leap,' recalling the role and comportment of the Knight of Faith:

> Certainly the wishful image in all religions, and even more powerfully in those of the messianic invocation of homeland, is that of feeling at home in existence, but one which does not see existence as confined to its clearly surveyable and so to speak local patriotic ranks of purpose. So that religion, *in its constant final relation to the last leap and the utopian Totum*, amounts to more than ethicizing and blander rationalizations, amounts to more than morality and clear surveyability even in Confucius, its strongest ethicizer.

And:

> The wishful content of religion remains that of feeling at home in the mystery of existence, a mystery mediated with man and well-disposed to his deepest wish, even to the repose of wishes. *And the further the subject with his founders of religion penetrates into the object-mysterium of a God conceived as the supreme Outside or the supreme Above and overpowers it, the more powerfully man in his earth-heaven or heaven-earth is charged with reverence for depth and infinity.* […] the Humanum now gains the mysterium of something divine, something deifiable, gains it as the future creation of the kingdom, but of the right kingdom.[41]

Thus, there exists a core methodological connection between Kierkegaard and Bloch, namely: their insertion of religious methodology, framed with metaphysical supports, to

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[40] Bloch, *The Spirit of Utopia*, 248. Here Bloch quotes Augustine's *Soliloquies*, Book 1, Chapter 7: 'God and the soul, that is what I desire to know. Nothing more? Nothing whatever!'

[41] Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 1196-1197, emphases in original.

problematize concretized visions of utopia (and modern notions of progress). Yet neither of them is the original architect of this logic. I next explore its genesis within St. Augustine's City of God.

St. Augustine: The Now and The Not-Yet

It was interesting to read *De civitas Dei* across the grain.[42] By this I mean returning to St. Augustine's utopian imaginations on the heels of examining the more contemporary theories of Bloch, Adorno, Benjamin, Levitas, and others. It was fascinating to trace the threads of quite similar impulses prevalent in all these accounts separated by more than a millennium. Here I want to analyze the common causal constituent existing within them, setting aside their theological differences. What especially interests me are the ways in which faith is situated instrumentally within processual accounts of utopia (or the kingdom of heaven) *as method* for its instantiation. I think this, in combination with what has already been said, makes it clear that any utopian proposal *not* based on a concretized construction of a specific socio-political vision trades on faith's functionality for its potentialization.

Given Bloch's insistence on the necessary disappearance of God in utopia (as replaced by the utopian Totum of the Absolute within humankind), one might initially ask if St. Augustine's heavenly city, ruled by God (as Yahweh), counts as a utopian candidate. Bloch takes up the same question in light of what might be a 'fixedness' in how the City of God is conceived. If Augustine's construct is a battle between an already-determined satanic city and a heavenly one, then is it really a striving for a fully developed Not-Yet-Conscious in the world? The question, however, devolves into a red-herring, and Bloch admits that, indeed, the *civitas Dei* is a utopia.[43] Bloch explains this as being highlighted within Augustine's concepts of the 'Now and Not-Yet.' Grace stirs humankind not just to do good but to prepare to do so – involving a looking towards a future instantiation of a better state of affairs that both supersedes the present yet guides those within it. It is, like his Not-Yet-Conscious, an "acquisition of the divine image" (Bloch's words), and as such it is fully a utopia in a Blochian sense. It is transcendent, yet not fixed (in a Pauline sense); it is situated on this earth and thus a progression of *human* history.

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[42] St. Augustine of Hippo, *The City of God*, in *The Great Books*, vol. 18, Encyclopedia Britannica, translated by M. Dodds, (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1951 ed.), pp. 129-620.
[43] Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 504-508.

Augustine locates the heavenly city's existence within faith itself.[44] Its position is thus clarified as what Kierkegaard describes as inwardness. Augustine refers to faith as having 'its throne in the soul,' and this is what allows it to be impervious to external suffering (which is, for Kierkegaard, the 'immediacy of the aesthetic'). As such, the utopian subject, for Augustine, can maturely hold in tension current suffering with the hope for future bliss.[45] Faith allows a suspension of fixedness related to present conditions of possibility based on 'the evidence of things not (yet) seen.' This is a result of its ability to overcome incredulity, specifically in the case of remedying our inability to conceive of future perfection in the imperfect now.[46] And this depiction mirrors Bloch's employment of utopian hope, contrasting what can be acted upon within the Real-Possible to potentialize the Not-Yet-Conscious (all the while aiming towards the novum).

Augustine goes on to claim that faith leads us "onwards to the fullest perfection by the vision of immutable truth." By militantly holding to it, faith "might advance the more confidently towards the truth, […] that there might be a way for man to man's God."[47] The city of God is both telos and eschaton for this faith, and as Kierkegaard noted, objective knowledge of it cannot be the basis on which faith, as utopian impulse, is founded. Augustine puts the idea this way: "For faith is then only faith when it waits in hope for what is not yet seen in substance."[48] In the same passage he claims that faith provides the only way to overcome the fear of death which is, for Bloch, the "power of the strongest anti-utopia."[49] Kierkegaard's conclusion concerning subjective truth is also presaged in this section, as Augustine insists that faith cannot be tested with a reward (as objective evidence). Receiving an immediate 'good' as a result of faith results in the fact that it 'would not even be faith.'

Augustine's utopia also provides content informing praxis. Much like Bloch's description of hope's affective militancy, and consistent with Kierkegaard's subjective passion, faith is related to bearing one another's burdens as represented within

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[44] St. Augustine, *The City of God*, B1; preface.

[45] Ibid, B1, C16; B3, C20.

[46] Ibid, B8, C24. See also B21, C5 for an argument for the necessary suspension of the primacy of 'objective' truth in the case of utopian hope.

[47] Ibid, B10, C22; B11, C2.

[48] Ibid, B11, C8; B13, C4.

[49] *The Principle of Hope*, 1103-1178. Here his central foil, among other accounts of mythical images deployed to manage the fear of death, is Christianity's account of redemption. This is referenced to a typology of Jesus as utopian prophet, not as a Catholic instantiation but in a this-world, human form.

humankind's 'We-problem.'[50] Faith is thus directly equivalent to hope in these passages. The terms are used interchangeably, even when describing how the city of God is to be instantiated both: 1) in the form of a person becoming a citizen, and 2) in its eventual, utopian appearance:

> And by faith [sic] is begotten in this world the city of God, that is to say, the man who has hoped to call on the name of the Lord. 'For by hope,' says the apostle, 'we are saved: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.' Who can avoid referring this to a profound mystery.[51]

Additionally, Augustine insists that it is not sin to inquire into how these acts, oriented by affect, function.[52] This correlates with what Bloch is doing on a broad scale in both the *Spirit of Utopia* and the final two volumes of *The Principle of Hope*. While we cannot describe the end-state of utopia accurately, it is not a mistake to question how we should orient our practical efforts to potentialize it. Ethically, these hopes-become-actions are, for both Bloch and Augustine, aimed at the summum bonum of existence, what Augustine calls the supreme good:

> To obtain the one [supreme good] and escape the other [supreme evil, i.e. death] we must live rightly. And thus it is written, 'The just lives by faith,' for we do not as yet see our good, and must therefore live by faith.[53]

It should be clear that the function of faith and utopian hope is the same for Bloch, Kierkegaard, and St. Augustine. Faith forms the methodological foundation for processually-situated utopian theories, and indeed this seems to be essentially, perhaps even necessarily, the case. This is not to suggest that hope, in the form of faith, constitutes the *entire* corpus of method accruing to future-oriented, praxis-focused accounts of utopia. The fact that all three authors canvassed here insist on an active, subjectively-based inquiry for what constitutes utopian methodology make this clear. St. Augustine, for example, considers the concept of communal love, in the form of *caritas*, as central to the 'working out' of the city of God within the earthly

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[50] St. Augustine, *The City of God*, B15, C6. His description here of humankind's propensity to err alongside an attitude of faith is reminiscent of Benjamin's grappling with the reconciliation of the past in the present.

[51] Ibid, B15, C18 and Romans 8:24-25 (*The Holy Bible*, ESV).

[52] *The City of God*, B16, C24.

[53] Ibid, B29, C4.

city.[54] In contrast Bloch threw himself into the analyses of multiple performative genres of artistic/aesthetic expression (music above all else) to hunt for the traces of utopian imagination running through them.

These differences noted, what is clear is the centrality of faith's function compared to subordinate methods. Processual utopia, considered against socio-political models, presupposes a lack of descriptive contours. This is not only a result of their fluidity but also due to their insistence that fully-descriptive imaginaries depend on fixed, crystallized histories that cannot help reifying extant relations of power (and, orthogonally, their constructed foundational myths). Troubling these teleologically-limited frameworks requires an untethering of utopia's possible end states from the same limitations. Faith in what cannot be seen, serving as evidence for things hoped for, situates itself in the epistemological gap created between the Real-Possible, the Not-Yet-Conscious, and the novum, between Augustine's earthly and heavenly cities.

Conclusion – Faith as Utopian Technology/Methodology

The methodological regression from the modern secular interpretations of history to their ancient religious pattern is, last but not least, substantially justified by the realization that we find ourselves more or less at the end of the modern rope. It has worn too thin to give hopeful support. We have learned to wait without hope, 'for hope would be hope in the wrong thing.' *Hence the wholesomeness of remembering in these times of suspense what has been forgotten* and of recovering the genuine sources of our sophisticated results. […] The outstanding element, however, out of which an interpretation of history could arise at all, is the basic experience of evil and suffering, and of man's quest for happiness. […] To ask earnestly the question of the ultimate meaning of history takes one's breath away; *it transports us into a vacuum which only hope and faith can fill*.

- Karl Löwith[55]

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[54] Hannah Arendt, *Love and St. Augustine*, English translation, copyright by The Literary Trust of Hannah Arendt Blucher, edited and with an interpretive essay by J. Vecchiarelli Scott and J. Chelius Stark, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996) In this doctoral dissertation, she demonstrates conclusively the primacy St. Augustine gives to *caritas*, or what she terms 'love of neighbor' as methodology for the *civitas Dei* throughout the treatise.
[55] *Meaning in History*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), 3-4, emphases mine.

I began by noting several ways in which descriptive utopias can be distinguished from their processual counterparts. My efforts have been focused on the primary methodological constituent of utopian theories by scholars exploring what I have called a 'processual' paradigm championed by Ernst Bloch and scholars who have followed him. An example of feminist utopian theory in this genre would be Kathi Weeks and her synthesis of Bloch's and Nietzsche's visions of future humanity leveraged as a vision about a hopeful future without alienated work as its central driver.[56] Jose Muňoz also relies heavily on a Blochian conceptualization of utopian hope while developing his themes of casting utopian artistic visions and wielding utopian 'gesture' as a tactic to pierce straight time with alternate possibilities.[57] Yet another exemplar of this genre of scholarship can be found within various works of Afrofuturism (as well as Africanfuturism and Afropresentism). These visions of Black futures, fueled by the utopian catalyst of Blochian hope, have been proposed by such authors as Ytasha Womack, Nnedi Okorafor, and Emily Lordi.[58]

My examination here has most closely paralleled Ruth Levitas' articulation of utopian method. She specifically addresses four aspects of utopian methodology, and my efforts have been focused on two of these (while orthogonally addressing the others).[59] The first, mythography, highlights the motivations within hope-based theories flowing from a foundation of distrust for capitalistic logics that crystallize a specific ontology and then defend it with an epistemological construction presented to subjects as defining modern rationality. These logics have failed. This is perhaps due to no malicious intent, but the insistent way in which they recreate themselves can (and should) be intentionally confronted. The return to considering a less analytical, indeed even *mystical*, critique of those logics is inevitable, given the eventual dead-end of consumer capitalism (simply in virtue of resource finitude). It is no wonder that Rebecca Solnit, when writing about the egalitarian communities forged on-the-spot in the wake of such disasters as the San

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[56] *The Problem with Work: Feminism, Marxism, Antiwork Politics, and Postwork Imaginaries* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), 186-204.

[57] *Cruising Utopia: The Then and There of Queer Futurity*. (New York: New York University Press, 2009), 35-40.

[58] Ytasha Womack, *Afrofuturism: The World of Black Sci-Fi and Fantasy Culture*, (Chicago: Lawrence Hill Books, 2013); Nnedi Okorafor, *Who Fears Death*, (Penguin Books, 2010) and *Lagoon*, (Hachette: Hodder and Stoughton, 2014); and Emily Lordi, *The Meaning of Soul: Black Music and Resilience since the 1960s*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2020).

[59] Levitas, "Marxism, Romanticism, and Utopia: Ernst Bloch and William Morris," 29 and "Where there is no vision, the people perish: A utopian ethic for a transformed future," 6-9.

Francisco earthquake and city-wide fire, calls the flattening of pre-existing conditions of privilege (and prejudiced) a "falling out of disaster."[60] This beautiful metaphor also evokes the apocalyptic imagery of Walter Benjamin's description of linear history as the accumulated detritus piled atop the wreckage of an original catastrophe.[61]

Perhaps we should interpret shared disaster as an antecedent condition to utopia. This would not just be the actual occurrence of such an event – but a communal recognition of it *as a disaster.* This is clearly described within Augustinian (cum biblical) accounts. The 'fall,' represented within humankind's original sin, results in the separation of the *civitas terrena* from the *civitas Dei*. To use Blochian terms, the core of humanity's existence contains a 'null,' indicating something necessary that is missing within its essence.[62] Utopia, or effort to strive towards it, then also comes from a place of loss. Within Christian doctrine, the desire for it comes from a place of *infinite* loss – the loss of direct access to the kingdom of heaven on earth. What seems necessary in all these cases is the acknowledgement of a preceding disaster, one that entails the loss of something central to what it is to 'be human.'

Keeping this in mind, consider that future speculation (Levitas' anticipatory function) seems more often than not relegated to the purview of the theological or the prophetic. This might seem strange when thinking about utopian theory, but I think it is unavoidable. To briefly address the latter (the prophetic), we should note that it entails the apocalyptic. Historiographical narrative trades in the apocalyptic as integral to its methodology. It inserts apocalypses within history as a tool to situate the dialectic; these are wielded as *technologies* with which to craft the story.[63] Prophetic elements within a given history, and their entailed (prophesied) apocalypse(s), are primarily described from various temporal vantage points that textually 'look back,' highlighting their synthetic role as meaning-makers for *both* religious and secular histories.[64]

Apocalypse then functions within historiography as a necessary arbiter in support of any narrative of 'progress.' Prophets unveil (αποκαλύπτω, *apokalýptọ*) the future. The point I am making

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[60] *A Paradise Built in Hell: The Extraordinary Communities That Arise in Disasters*. (New York: Penguin Books, 2009), 86, 107-109.
[61] On the Concept of History, Thesis IX
[62] Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 180-186, 189, 193.
[63] Jay Burkette, "Historiography and Apocalypse: an Intimate Relationship?" *História da Historiografia*, not yet published, in review/revision (2022).
[64] I refer here to modern histories, following Löwith's description in *Meaning in History*, 1-19. This contrasts with 'ancient' histories, which feature a cyclical (and inescapable) form to their narratives.

here, referencing Levitas' claim about utopian hope's *function*, concerns an emphasis on the *form* given to prophetic histories-become-futures. In the prophetic case, an iconic *historiographical* form predominates. A vantage point is created that positions desired elements such as to entail their apocalyptic conclusions (as narratives of progress). It turns out that instead of theorizing about the future, prophets construct stories about the future referencing an already solidified, teleologically-constrained interpretation of the past.[65]

But what about that portion of future theorizing accruing to (for Levitas) 'the theological'? Here I think we advance beyond the historiographical form of the apocalyptic into the realm of possibly new, even radical, future content. I have examined an occurrence of this phenomenon, and we can continue to frame it within Levitas' four aspects. The mythographical, educative function now intersects with its causal artifacts, initiating a shattering of crystallized history. Theological, perhaps better, mystical, resources seem the natural tools of those wishing to oppose a straight-line historical exegesis that entails a trivially tautological telos.[66] Maybe this explains why materialistic philosophers of politics and history, while critiquing religion's role in creating current political structures, find their own theories full of religious symbols and concepts.[67]

As a telling example, one finds even in Marx a materialistic cycle (highlighting, like a photo negative, its transcendent sibling) of birth, death, resurrection, and even a savior. These are, of course, the ever-more-solidified entrenchment of the bourgeoisie's dispossession of the proletariat hard on the heels of the *Aufklärung*, the pending destruction of that system represented in the concatenation of its self-consuming structures, its reincarnation (or trans-carnation) into a society by and for the proletariat, and the person of its savior embodied in the

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[65] This locates the 'ends of history' within manufactured historical changes, for Löwith these are: *finis*, *telos*, and *eschaton* (*Meaning in History*, 18). See also Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation*, (Boston: John Hopkins University Press, 1987) for an account of how history's form *creates* historical content.

[66] Which is perhaps why Bloch and others openly embrace the transcendental nature of their theories while maintaining their materiality. See also Paul Ricouer, *Lectures on Ideology and Utopia*, ed. by George Taylor, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 272-273 and Karl Mannheim, *Ideology and Utopia: An Introduction to the Sociology of Knowledge*, (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1936 ed.), 192-195.

[67] Examples include Bloch, *The Principle of Hope* and *The Spirit of Utopia*, Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, translated by Eiland, H. and McLaughlin, K. (Boston, MA: Harvard University Press, 2002); Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, (London: Verso Press, 1944); and Baudrillard, *The Perfect Crime*.

inevitable revolution.[68] The resemblance of this cycle to its metaphysical counterpart is hard to miss, and it is significant that most materialistic critiques of the status quo since Marx pointedly concentrate only on the first two phases, birth and death. Consider that many agree with Marx (and others, including Althusser), that the Enlightenment embarked Western civilization on a capitalistic voyage that entails an inevitable settling of accounts, a predestined appointment with Charon and the Styx.[69] Birth and death are immanent. Yet there are now precious few mentions of resurrection and saviors within the cold stream of Marxism, of politically constructed utopias and socially engineered 'better days.'

Marxism, however, also possesses a warm stream. In this we can locate Bloch and others searching for ways to recuperate both resurrection and savior within processual utopia. I have argued here that religious faith (described as hope) is leveraged as the primary methodology within these theories. As such it also, like the apocalypse, is a technology. In this case it is a *utopian* technology aimed at liberating history in order to unbridle the future. In contrast to historicity's apocalyptic formula mentioned above, leveraging faith as utopian hope requires, instead of a solidification of prophetic histories, a commitment to smashing them. Only in the determined negation of bounded teleologies can the future be open for possibilities not yet recognizable while preserving, for both Bloch and Augustine, the ability to reference the novum or the city of God. Bloch calls this the "category of Front":

> Man and process, or rather: subject and object in dialectically materialist process, consequently both stand equally on the Front. And there is no other place for militant optimism than the place which the *category of Front* opens up. The philosophy of this optimism, that is, of materially comprehended hope, is itself, as the trenchant knowledge of non-contemplation, concerned with the foremost segment of history, and is so even when it concerns itself with the past, namely with the still undischarged future in the past.[70]

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[68] Karl Marx, *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy, Vol. 1*, originally published in 1867 and edited by F. Engels, (New York: International Publishers Co., Inc., 1967); *The Communist manifesto*, first published 1848, (London: Pluto Press, 1996); and *The German Ideology: Part One*, (with F. Engels, unpublished, 1932).

[69] Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in L. Althusser (ed.), *Lenin And Philosophy and Other Essays*. (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971).

[70] Bloch, *The Principle of Hope*, 200, emphasis his.

I'll finish by noting that this affinity between transcendence and utopian faith/hope also points us towards a broader delinearization of modern notions of history, one that Benjamin goes to great lengths to describe as necessary to understand a disastrous present. Modern history focuses on an already-determined framework and trajectory of 'progress,' the definition of which is firmly controlled by obtaining structures of power. Latour equates this to the inherently inconsistent 'modern constitution,' requiring continuous emergence of fully-formed, purified phenomena without any reference to the hybrid ontologies that give them birth. Indeed, this notion of time is something he contrasts with mystical worldviews – who construct their "regime of time around Presence (that is, the presence of God), and not around the emergence of the vacuum, or DNA, or microchips, or automated factories…"[71]

For Löwith, Augustine's method of finding meaning in history is revealing. Eschewing ancient histories entailing a cyclical return of events dictated by the fates, Augustine also resists the tyranny of objective truth (what he calls 'the visible') by prioritizing subjective, or invisible, truth as the eschaton of human existence. As he puts it, "the classical view of the world is a view of things visible, while the Christian 'view' of the world is, after all, not a view but *a matter of hope and faith* in things invisible."[72] Indeed in his preface, Löwith says something astonishing which will nicely end this essay:

> All the ultimate questions concerning first and last things are of this character; they remain significant because no answer can silence them. They signify a fundamental quest; for there would be no search for the meaning of history if its meaning were manifest in historical events. It is the very absence of meaning in the events themselves that motivates the quest. Conversely, it is only within a pre-established horizon of ultimate meaning, however hidden it may be, that actual history seems to be meaningless. This horizon has been established by history, for it is Hebrew and Christian thinking that brought this colossal question into existence. To ask earnestly the question of the ultimate meaning of history takes one's breath away; *it transports us into a vacuum which only hope and faith can fill.*[73]

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[71] Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, 70-71.
[72] Löwith, *Meaning in History*, 160-166, emphasis mine.
[73] Ibid, 3-4, emphasis mine.