Utopia as Akairological Rupture

ABSTRACT:

This article argues for a reconceptualization of utopia as akairological rupture. Its central thesis disputes the conventional reading of utopia as a teleological goal to be realized by a social collective. Thus rather than viewing the potentiality of utopia as a prescribed ideal commonwealth whose inhabitants live in harmony, I argue that it should be seen as an akairological rupture, manifested through a determinately negative, individual, approach. In this reading, utopia is primarily a social condition within culture, and perennially opposed to any ideal telos. This temporal and qualitative reconceptualization of utopia as disruptive is anathema to the positive reading that sees it as feasible through social reform and rational discourse. This reconceptualization argues for the importance of developing a reading of utopia that can transcend any reified, fixed conception that seeks to domesticate it in the service of a contingent political aspiration, however noble and humanitarian it may appear to be. Herein lies its critical potentiality under neoliberal conditions.

The Historical Context Utopia is a product of Renaissance and Reformation thought which blends Hellenistic rationalism with the "democratizing impulse of Western Christianity."1 It therefore has temporal, spatial and historical qualities, and is often associated with a "desire for a better way."2 First coined as a pun by Thomas More in his 1516 eponymous book, the word "utopia" is a combination of eu (good) + ou (not) + topos (place). The original title of the book was De optimo rei publicæ deque nova insula Utopia, and all of its various translations allude to a notion of the "best state of a republic/commonwealth." At its inception, utopia was thus considered a physical place. In my reading, utopia, in contrast, is primarily a social condition within culture, and perennially against, any notion of an ideal telos. As Raymond Geuss has observed, the malaise of contemporary culture lies within "the structure of rationality itself," which renders forms of "political action traditionally recommended by those on the left to be ineffective or even counterproductive."3 Geuss argues that the discourse of the left has not been able to move beyond Theodor Adorno's prescient analyses in the 1960s, which diagnosed the ineffectiveness of traditional political action.4 Attempts to articulate a palatable utopia are, then, all too liable to fall foul of the dominant mores and limitations of ratiocination.

The contemporary socioeconomic context is that of neoliberalism. My contention is that the neoliberal thought that underpins our political and economic culture, while not uncontested, fundamentally serves to shape and limit any remaining conceptions of a utopian society. Utopia is thereof restricted to a market-based capitalism in which the rule of law secures individual negative freedom. I adopt David Harvey's definition of the neoliberal paradigm as "a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets and free trade."5 Grounded in the tradition of the Enlightenment, this paradigm is ostensibly concerned with human flourishing. Neoliberalism is manifest in the thinking and influence of political philosophers such as Friedrich Hayek, and of economists such as Milton Friedman (and the Chicago School).6 Within orthodox positivist economics, faith in the forces of the market, combined with a concomitant belief in a positivist

conception of science, along with a commodified notion of a better way of living, have led to treating the norms that govern economic systems as the laws of nature and thus as akin to the laws of physics. Yet neoliberalism necessarily can only render a conservative utopia, and thus bring history to a standstill. This is because within the neoliberal paradigm, socio-political improvement is achieved through individual freedom and the manipulation of the market as a natural phenomenon. While this improvement will be realized through a process of reform, such reform can only be a stripping down of a capitalist system to its essential elements, and hence, for example, to minimising state interventions in favour of largely laissez-faire approaches. Reform remains within the capitalist framework rather than occurring through revolution and the attendant demand for a paradigm shift in social and political thought. Utopia, in this paradigm, can therefore only be incrementally different from that which exists.7 It is precisely within this context that Russell Jacoby's thoughts echo mine when he allots time for students to sketch out their own utopia: They come up with laudable ideas—universal health care with choice of doctors; free higher education; clean parks; ecological vehicles—but very little that is out of the ordinary. Their boldest dreams could be realized by a comprehensive welfare state.8 In an age of "There is no Alternative" (TINA),9 it is understandable why Jacoby's students deem the above notions utopian in a pejorative sense, that is, as fantastical and unrealistic under existing conditions. In 2007, on the brink of the financial crisis, Jacoby argued that "liberal anti-utopians are almost universally honored; their ideas have become the conventional wisdom of our day."10 Following the 2008 financial crisis, deregulated capitalism was revealed as highly fallible. For Ruth Levitas, post-2008 social policy, both as an academic discipline and as a political practice, was not utopian enough. She rightly asserted that such policy is "dominated by a mode of thinking about the future that is essentially one of extrapolation accompanied by crisis management and trouble-shooting."11 It is within this context that Levitas reads piecemeal reform as "infinitely safer" than utopian proposals that run the risk of "totalitarian attempts to impose social and political changes on populations."12 With the prevalence of the TINA approach and neoliberalism, socially progressive reforms certainly do appear utopian in a fantastical manner. Her caveat for the popular advocacy of reform is that "the preference for this kind of safety is tenable only from the position.

that current systems are, at least to an adequate degree, 'working'. Indeed, the trope of capitalist hegemony is that capitalism 'works'."13 It is against this reduction of utopia to piecemeal neoliberal reform that my reconceptualization of utopia responds. My argument takes its cue from Fredric Jameson's negative reading of utopia, which was itself inspired by Adorno's analysis of late capitalism, in that the concept maintains a critical function only when non-reified or not neatly packaged for consumption.14 A key issue is to avoid the codification or precise definition of utopia nor of any supposed chronological path toward it. This is because, in my Jamesonian reading, the function of utopia lies not in helping us to imagine a better future but rather in demonstrating our utter incapacity to imagine such a future—our imprisonment in a non-utopian present without historicity or futurity—so as to reveal the ideological closure of the system in which we are somehow trapped.15 Jameson acknowledges that, given the dominant pragmatist tradition of twentiethcentury philosophy in his native America, this negative reading of utopia is "a peculiarly defeatist position," and that "one is tempted to evoke nihilism or neurosis; it is certainly rather un-American in spirit."16 My contribution is therefore a bleak standpoint: in an Adornoian (or Bradleyan) vein, utopia, as the good place that is no place, is best articulated through knowing the worst of what exists.17 The point of the "best-worst" case scenario is to render lucid the inability of rational discourse to positively articulate a concept such as utopia;18 or, in Jamesonian terms, to render lucid "our imprisonment in a non-utopian present without historicity or futurity." Therefore, my Adorno-JamesonGuess-inspired reading of utopia is at odds with the dominant reading of the concept as commensurate with either piecemeal neoliberal reform, or indeed with radical

“blueprints” that would guide the engineering of progress towards a perfect society. Indeed, the predominance of the neoliberal paradigm has become so all-encompassing that not even progressive movements such as Occupy, Black Lives Matter and so forth can articulate their beliefs and desires in a non-commodified manner. Classic Utopia The nineteenth-century socialist movements represented the classic, blueprint concept of utopia. Their notions of utopia were grounded in post-Enlightenment, liberal thought, and laid the conceptual foundation for subsequent classic utopian responses to the crises of modernity. Following Jacoby, I juxtapose classic utopia with “iconoclastic” utopia,19 which, I argue, is transcendental and, in effect, a condition of possibility, but unconcerned with stipulating the dictates of a material and reformatory reading of utopia.20 Through a critical social theory lens, classic utopia will be deemed “finalist,” and what I shall label iconoclastic utopia, “fallibilist.” This will set the scene to then analyse kairos, and how this polysemic concept of time may be related to the iconoclastic and akairological reconceptualization of utopia this article argues for. Over the past five centuries, utopia has been used in a number of iterations and with a variety of connotations across the political spectrum. As Jameson observes, utopia has “come to be a code word on the left for socialism or communism; while on the right it has become synonymous with ‘totalitarianism,’ or, in effect, with Stalinism.”21 These readings are commensurate with the classic version of utopia that stipulates an ideal space in the future, whereby perfection is attained, and history, as formally understood, comes to an end. Paul Tillich observes that whilst in infinite progress, the “realization of meaning is never attained” in classic utopia (which is why) history must come to an end.22 Classic utopia is therefore a telos that is plotted out in advance, and hence the description of it as a “blueprint” utopia. This version of utopia is exemplified in works such as Francis Bacon’s New Atlantis, and underpins the positivism of Auguste Comte, whose law of three stages of history rejected metaphysics and instead recognized only empirical facts and scientifically observable phenomena.23 Classic utopia therefore has a paternalistic and prescriptive quality to it. For example, it was politically enacted by the Jacobins of the French Revolution.24 The Marquis de Condorcet, Henri de Saint-Simon, and Robert Owen, amongst others, all proposed teleological, spatial utopias.25 Stalinism declared itself as the apparent realization of utopia through Marx’s historical materialism. Lucy Sargisson argues that the above examples all involve the social collective in line with a grand narrative. As such, these utopias that “appear to be formed by reference to perfection have a static feel to them ([Edward] Bellamy’s Looking Backward [1888] is one example).”26 These utopias are commensurate with the notion of chronological progress, and, I argue, do not withstand scrutiny when it comes to a contemporary, akairological, reading of utopia. Utopia: Finalist or Fallibilist? Eschewing the above notion of classic utopia as a future (temporal) perfect (spatial) commonwealth, I draw on Maeve Cooke’s finalist/fallibilist dichotomy27 to show that utopia falls in the finalist camp, and in effect signals the closure of a historical process. Cooke responds to this problem of finalism by evoking a “post-metaphysical” strategy, namely, by accepting the challenge that “utopian thinking has an unavoidable metaphysical moment.”28 For Cooke, ascribing a metaphysical quality to utopia renders it pluralistic and malleable, not dogmatic. Moreover, Cooke’s fallibilist reading is at odds with the neoliberal reading of utopia, which deems it compatible with a classic reading of the concept as allowing every individual to pursue their own market oriented “good,” and thereby concealing the metaphysical aspect that underpins it. Cooke therefore urges the theorist to accept the inevitability of utopia as presupposing a social good but to “maintain a productive tension between closure and contestability and between attainability and elusiveness” in a fallibilist conceptualization.29 The fallibilist conceptualization means that utopia is literally nowhere: “it is construed as a perfect place beyond history that, due to our dissatisfaction with existing social conditions, we long to inhabit, but that always evades our attempts to do so.”30 This conception of utopia is therefore a transcendental one, albeit expressive of what might be termed a “negative transcendentalism,” in so far as it

articulates conditions of impossibility, and as per my argument, the impossibility of a positive articulation of utopia. It appears that the best the theorists can do is to articulate their entrapment within the contemporary discourse. So, as Krishan Kumar asserts, whilst "utopia may be nowhere . . . historically and conceptually, it cannot be just anywhere."31 Seeking to maintain a tension between "closure and contestability," and "attainability and elusiveness," Cooke argues that the theorist may maintain a commitment to a "metaphysical idea of the 'good society' without succumbing to 'bad utopianism' and 'finalism,' with its attendant risk of 'totalitarianism'": utopia is non-dogmatic; it does not impose a vision of the good life, but invites critical engagement with contemporary discourse. Cooke continues by arguing that maintaining such a commitment "allows critical social theory to retain its utopian dimension and, with this, its power to justify and motivate transformative social action."32 However, utopia as "akairological rupture" is neither finalist nor does it involve a transcendental commitment. But neither is it, following Cooke, a justification or motivation for "transformative social action" with an apparently preordained idea of the "good society." The latter notions fall within the realm of reform, in line with agreed social objectives. My reconceptualization of utopia is therefore open-ended and does not subscribe to a formal political outlook, neither to social reform nor to transformation. Eric Charles White criticizes this open-ended reading, arguing that an "unqualified affirmation of perpetual novelty condemns us to eternal frustration. Endless interpretation has as its obverse an ascetic refusal to enjoy the undeniable pleasure of even a provisional totality."33 It is in this notion of "undeniable pleasure" that my reconceptualization of utopia steadfastly refuses to indulge.34 Instead, in my Jameson-inspired reading, utopia may play a critically substantive role by highlighting existing entrapment Chronos and Eternity Given that classic utopia entails the transformation of present society into a future (perfected) one, it presupposes a particular conception of time. Indeed, the writing of history itself, as a political enterprise that judges the past and present and does so in the anticipation of a better future, presupposes a certain understanding of time: history is measured temporally.35 Conversely, it may be suggested that different social and cultural formations lead to different experiences of time. Kant deemed time and space as a priori particulars, which structure the manifold of experience. These particulars constitute the basis of intelligibility of any subsequent empirical content that is imposed upon them. Space and time do not, then, necessarily correspond to properties of the thing-in-itself, in the sense that they do not necessarily exist independently of the human observer. Rather, they set the parameters for the possibility of empirical enquiry. The a priori of time entails that it unfolds uniformly into the future. More precisely, when Kant introduces these categories, and in particular that of causality, time is understood in the unfolding of chains of causes and effects. The human agent is therefore able to shape the future by bringing about causes that will have known effects. Kant's analysis is thus commensurate with the political positivism of Comte, and indeed with any form of social engineering in so far as such projects align with the scientific method, planning, and the standardization of knowledge described by Harvey: in effect, they represent a blueprint utopia. Crucially, however, it may be suggested that this discourse on a reasonable, scientific utopia does not account for the individual human being's qualitative experience of time. Kant's analysis, however, helps to highlight the tension in correlating empirical, measurable time with lived, individual experience: there is a qualitative surplus in lived experience that can be referred to as the ineffable, which exceeds the possibility of ratiocination to encapsulate the totality of being. Among the many responses to Kant's conception of time, four are particularly relevant to my argument on utopia. Tillich observed that the ancient Greeks had three words for time: aión, chronos and kairos. Chronos, Tillich proposed, is measurable clock time and the root of words such as "chronology" and "chronometer." Chronos, in other words, denotes physical time that is grasped through repeated, quantitatively uniform and predictable units.36 Giacomo Marramao, in contrast, equates chronos with aión, or eternity: "chronos is the moving image of aión." He argues, following

Plato, that “chronos is the true imitation of aión in the sense of a division, a rhythmic articulation of duration. It is like a reproduction by snapshots of the continuum of a movie plot.” Marramao sustains this definition by positing that in the Vulgate, chronological time is defined as the “moving image of eternity.”37 In his reading of aión, chronos is implicated as perennial eternity, and thus, implicitly, in nihilism. Time is what is (infinitely) counted; time as aión, and chronos as its numerical measure thereof. Aión is thus ontological time, while chronos is epistemic time: time measured by human beings. Utopia is thus implicated in a reading of time as chronological. Michael Theunissen observes that aión translates in the Latin tradition as aeternitas, “setting it off against sempiternitas, unlimited duration.”38 He implicitly grounds utopia as a desired and possible end time by distinguishing between limited duration contra unlimited duration, and between alternative readings of eternity: [W]e can speak of eternity either in a weak or a strong sense. In the weak sense, eternity could include unlimited duration. Inasmuch as duration, even without beginning or end, is admittedly a duration in time, it seems reasonable to restrict the concept of eternity to eternity in the strong sense.39 Eternity in Theunissen’s strong sense is thus compatible with the classic, eschatological, utopia. It may be suggested that chronology is aligned with the possibility of social engineering and the implementation of blueprints to realize a classic utopia, for it presupposes Kant’s causally determined time, as well as the dictates of time as money through the logic of capitalism, where units of labour-time can be given precise exchange-values. The implications of recording time via the chronometer has had totalizing effects on both thought and action. A neat conception of “past and future as linearly connected by the ticking away of the clock allowed all manner of scientific and historical conceptions to flourish,”40 and led to the fallacy of social agents being able to absolutely control the future. Indeed, as György Lukács argued in History and Class Consciousness, clock time is very much a product of capitalism and a reflection of the quantification of human experience in the modern world: Neither objectively nor in his relation to his work does man [sic] appear as the authentic master of the process; on the contrary, he is a mechanical part incorporated into a mechanical system. He finds it already pre-existing and self-sufficient; it functions independently of him and he has to conform to its laws whether he likes it or not.41 So, whilst “no civilization can avoid endowing itself with some measure of predictability, even if limited or minimal, in the same way that it cannot entirely avoid repetition and cycles,”42 this model of linear chronological time is organized from a particular humancentred perspective. Given the social basis of human existence, the precise way in which time is articulated as both repetition and cycles, and as what might be called “the arrow of time”—and thus also its projectability into a predictable future—will vary from culture to culture. These articulations of time both respond to and shape a particular culture’s organization of social practice. It may therefore be argued that Kant, with his privileging of causally determinate linear progress over repetition or cycles, did not analyse time per se, but time as it is experienced in modern industrial society. The linear model further offers a single, and arguably, repressive, solution to the problem of how the temporal flow of time and individual life may be correlated, and thus how social practice is to be organized. Akin to the working “utopia” projected by neoliberalism, the linear model serves to block out all other solutions as unimaginable or unrealizable. To briefly summarize the argument to this point: Kant’s and Tillich’s conceptions of chronos have been interpreted as offering accounts of time as a quantitative universal and as linearly progressive (rather than cyclical). Such conceptions of time are doubly problematic. On the one hand, with reference to Kant, it has been suggested (via Lukács) that he articulated only the experience of clock time within the specific historical period of industrial capitalism. On the other hand, even if, as with Tillich, chronos were to be accepted as an ontological universal, it remains at odds with the qualitative, personal, experience of time. Time, in other words, potentially differs from one person to another. Marramao, however, offers a radical response to these problems by restating the Kantian distinction between the phenomenal experience of time and the qualities of

the thing-initself. The Back-and-Forth Flow of Time In contrast to Kant's and Tillich's view of chronos as quantitative universal time, Marramao asserts that contemporary enquiries have resulted in a "disintegration of the idea of a universal flow of time," arguing that Newton's mechanics, Einstein's relativity, as well as Heisenberg's and Schrodinger's quantum mechanics, all operate consistently even if time moves backwards and thus that the "'unidirectional character of time' appears to be no more than a mental deception, or, 'psychological time'."43 As Carlo Rovelli observes in The Order of Time, Newton argued that "true" time was only indirectly accessible, through calculation, which is why the model of time as independent of material things enabled the emergence of a modern physics that works consistently.44 We therefore only describe the world as it happens, not as it is: "how events happen, not how things are."45 Moreover, his point that we can only describe things post-rem, echoing Kant, demonstrates the disingenuousness of positive knowledge acquisition as correlative with ontological fact. The works of Marramao and Rovelli thus further articulate the problem of reducing time to chronos as strictly unidirectional and quantifiable. And their arguments have implications for understanding historical time, and thus for understanding the way in which different conceptions of time shape the organization of social practice and attempts to realize a better future society. Indeed, Whig history in the tradition of liberalism necessitates a reading of time as linear and quantifiable in order to legitimize its claims of unidirectional progress. Through such a reading of time, tensions and contradictions in the discourse on progress may be explained as serving to justify the status quo, as they are seen as aberrations and instantiations of political regression.46 However, as I will show, a reconceptualization of utopia as akairological—that highlights the limits of liberal, positive, rational articulation—avoids the problem of reducing utopia to a teleological outcome. Temporal Disruption Classic utopia, as noted earlier, cannot be realized through a scientific, teleological project grounded in either an idealist or a materialist, positivist dialectic. Rather, according to Saul Newman, in order for a genuinely radical utopia to be realized it must be that which breaks with all determinism, positivism and historical materialism—and which affirms what is heterogenous to the current order. In order words, it can be seen as a disruption of the current order which, at the same time, emerges from within the current order, and which introduces a moment of radical indeterminacy and unpredictability in which anything is possible. Rather than a society of the future, utopia is an event which takes place in the present.47 When juxtaposed to the causal (Kantian) relationship between present and future Newman's utopia appears as a radically disruptive one that cannot be conceptualized from the present (even if it is contained within it). Newman's reading of utopia is thus akairological in pairing utopia with disruption or rupture, and demonstrates the limits of rationally articulated discourse. Neither Kant's casually articulated time nor measurable chronos are applicable to such utopian thought. I agree with Newman's view in so far as utopia is an akairological "event" that takes place in the present. Eschewing teleology or a future orientation, this conception of utopia is neither chronological nor kairological, and can only be articulated as akairological, that is, where individual lived experience is incommensurate with the idea of progress. Akairos will be seen to engender a disruption of the quantitative time of chronos and as marked by an ineffable, qualitative surplus that is inarticulable. Having established a clearer understanding of chronos, the problems of the classic utopia have been shown to lie in the presuppositions about time as a regularly controllable chronology. Yet kairos, which stresses the qualitative experience of time, resolves this problem by supplanting it with an "iconoclastic" version of utopia, as that which renders possible a form of critical thought that escapes a mundane reformist, teleological understanding of time and social change. The aim of the following analysis of kairos is therefore to lay the groundwork for the proposed concept of utopia as akairological disruption. Kairos In his distinction between the three ancient Greek conceptions of time—aión, chronos and kairos—Tillich argued that kairos emphasized the qualitative concept of "the right time" as opposed to chronos or the quantitative concept of time. Kairos thus centres on

the meaning of time and crucially on “historical time,”48 thereby introducing a new and more profound element in its articulation of a telos of history than is found in the more secular classic utopia tradition of thought. As a polysemic concept, Kairos has been variously interpreted as, for example, “due measure,” “fitness,” and “opportunity.”49 These qualifiers have led scholars such as James Kinneavy to state “that you could probably take a concept of kairos and apply it to practically almost anything.”50 William Trapani and Chandra Maldonado helpfully note that “few concepts rival kairos’ terminological capaciousness”: The term has indexed diverse notions such as ‘symmetry,’ ‘propriety,’ ‘occasion,’ ‘due measure,’ ‘fitness,’ ‘tact,’ ‘decorum,’ ‘convenience,’ ‘proportion,’ ‘fruit,’ ‘profit,’ and ‘wise moderation’ (Sipiora), just as it has enabled granular distinctions between closely related notions like the ‘opportune,’ the ‘appropriate,’ and the ‘possible’ (Poulakos). Its elasticity often encompasses its polar opposite, such as the timely and the untimely (Leston), the temporal and the spatial (McAlister), the secure and the vulnerable (Brown, Jr.), and the management, as well as loss of control over situations (Scott).51 They also note the contemporary interest in the concept, from the desire to reinstate a classic, or, in other words, a Tillichian, reading of kairos,52 to what I propose—to supplant the classic view by reconceptualizing kairos and thereby reconceptualizing utopia.53 Kairos’s elusive nature is as apparent as is its enmeshment within chronological time. Marramao is once again instructive: he defines kairos as neither the opportune moment nor as the eschatological event in Christian thought, but rather as the “fundamental dimension of the appropriate time, of the crucial moment that is nothing but that part of each ‘identity,’ within which the very phenomenon of the mind, or Awareness, takesplace.”54 What this means can be clarified through Marramao’s rendering of kairos as tempus. Marramao convincingly argues through a close reading of Plato and attention to ancient Greek etymology, that the correlative of tempus is indeed not chronos, but kairos.55 Spatially, he explains, tempus indicates that the vital parts of an organism are “in shape,” that is, balanced and tempered. Once kairos is understood in terms of tempus, “we can only experience the dimension of due time, of ‘kairological’ time, independently from the nature of the disorientation that delimits it.” As the “union of elements, [tempus thus] becomes the relation and ‘housing structure’ of life forms, while spatium as a residue, indicates the constitutive uncertainty and instability of any dwelling.”56 In contrast with Marramao’s interpretation, Terry Eagleton argues that kairos might superficially be taken to suggest the appropriateness of associating utopia—as Newman’s moment of disruption—with kairos. As an example he uses the history of the capitalist mode of production: “for a while things slide along smoothly, and then there occurs a crisis, disruption or revolution.”57 Eagleton thus equates kairos with “crisis, disruption or revolution,” and, ipso facto, chronos as ordered and harmonious, where apparently “things slide along smoothly.” This reading, grounded in Marxist historical materialism, is still ultimately related to a teleological notion of human authenticity and final flourishing, in so far as any disruption is that of the dominant capitalist narrative in favour of its alternative non-capitalist, socialist or communist version. Kairos is thus rendered as creatively destructive in an instrumental manner. Melissa Shew proposes that kairos both “stands outside and perhaps measures chronological time,” and is “out of place or strange, in being a moment that changes the whole of everything.”58 While the former definition is compatible with Marramao’s, her second proposition is paradoxically compatible with both Marramao’s and Eagleton’s definitions, because, as either disruptive or in shape, kairos may be deemed “out of place or strange.” Like Shew, I argue that paradoxically kairos both presupposes chronos59 as well as appearing to be out of place in its exceptionalism. Suffice it to say that David Wood’s observation that kairos proffers a “complexity to temporal organization” is apt.60 The reading of kairos as either balance or as disruption, sustained by a meta-narrative, thus owes much to the theological or Christian appropriation of the concept.

Kairos in Christian Theology The common reading of kairos in relation to chronos owes much to the Christian appropriation of the concept in the New Testament. Following this tradition, Tillich sees kairological time as "qualitatively fulfilled time, the moment that is creation and fate."61 This eschatological reading suggests the necessity of an end of a process. The Christian interpretation of kairos distinguishes between 'kairos' and 'o Kairos,' the latter being the New Testament version of the former, subsuming it under the notion of "The time."62 As the "last" time, or "time of crisis," eschatos kairos suggests that "chronological time must be completed" before the kairological "end time and final judgement" may come to fruition.63 Tillich notes the problem of eschatos kairos in so far as the "concept of an end of time, in a temporal sense, cannot be maintained. It would not be an end, but a discontinuance. The thought of a discontinuance of time, however, is itself a timedetermined thought, and therefore contradicts itself."64 Drawing on Tillich's reading of the end time, Frank Kermode expounds on the temporal account of eschatological Kairos in The Sense of an Ending arguing that the notion of the "End changes all." He notes that the ancient Greeks, and also the Hebrews, had "no contrast between time which is simply 'one damn thing after another'," and time that is concentrated in the kairological. The New Testament, he concludes, laid the foundation for the modern sense of an epoch as well as the distinction between the "coming of God's time (kairos), the fulfilling of the time (kairos—Mark i.15), [and] the signs of the times (Matt. xvi.2,3), as against passing time, chronos."65 Eschatos kairos fulfils the past, validating the Old Testament prophecy, thereby squaring the circle of history. If the End time is eschewed, akairos comes to the fore. The notion of an End cannot be understood independently of Christian eschatology. Kairos, in this tradition, is equated with the Messianic, and is rendered as o kairós. Messianism as eschatological can thus be reconceptualized in Marramao's terms as a messianism "after the end of the faith in history," that is to say, once the faith in linear progress to a better society is lost. According to Marramao this messianic moment is only articulable through political action: since each historical moment is "locked," it can be opened by political action, which itself can thereby be qualified as messianic. Thus the Messiah is not "the grand representation of Roman Catholicism" but appears in a "moment of danger, when a small opening seems to reveal itself: the entryway for the messianic is also the entrance point of contingency, of transience." He deems this moment kairological and as coinciding with a quasi "interlude between being and nothingness."66 Marramao's reading of the messianic as kairological tempus, ready to emerge at each and every moment, is commensurate with Walter Benjamin's Jetztzeit, or "now-time." This time is a Modell (model) of the Messianic, "'shot through' with 'chips' (Splitter) of Messianic time, [a] site of 'weak' (schwache) Messianic power."67 Now-time, Roland Boer argues, is Benjamin's kairos, read through an eschatological o kairós, or, messianic, End time, and as "both a moment and a period of imminent and final crisis."68 For Peter Osborne, Benjamin's now-time is thus an intense, interruptive element within normative narrativity. As such, it "draws attention to its utopian core: a pair of ideals (fulfilment and equality) which derive their meaning from the level of history as a whole."69 Benjamin's kairos, steeped in an eschatological reading, and, as interruptive, as per Eagleton's reading, aligns with the notions of "fulfilment and equality," and is thus in line with a traditional 10 S. DHILLON Western Marxist reading of kairos as revolutionary and as serving a particular socioeconomic organization of society. Marramao's messianism therefore has Benjaminian connotations in its political advocacy.70 Akairos An eschatological, messianic reading of kairos is qualitatively different from that of akairological utopia. In my reading, akairos is understood as untimely, unconcerned with eschatology or a telos. In helping to articulate akairos, Robert Leston's distinction between cosmological and nomological kairos is instructive. The former is an opening toward a "future to come that sees the present expression of the logos as a single moment in a never-ending cosmic flow of time." The latter "turns back that potentiality in order to ground it into the here and now."71 Crucially, however, nomological kairos does not attempt to stipulate the

future, but rather ventures into the unknown; it is thus much more akin to an untimely rupture, echoing Newman's argument for a moment of "radical indeterminacy," over and above the timely, or opportune. Supplanting Tillich's juxtaposition of chronos against kairos, and building upon the reading of kairos proffered by Marramao, Shew, and Leston in particular, I argue, following Boer, that in conceptualizing utopia, akairos is a more instructive concept than chronos and Kairos, because akairos is an interruption in the order of chronology and not an apex of "goodness" as per kairos in the eschatological sense. Instead, akairos is non-prescriptive and engenders a rupture in the fabric of lived historical time. It cannot be plotted out but only articulated negatively by what it is not. What akairos is not, is commensurate with chronology in a rationally articulated manner, and is therefore not compatible with any sense of a linear progress to an end of history, be this understood as o kairos, or as a secular classic utopia. Akairos as rupture is thus utopia in so far as it is no place, and euchronistic: it is the "good" time in so far as it is not what currently exists. The eu of utopia is necessarily not articulable through either chronos or Kairos, which is why correlating utopia with akairos crucially ensures that utopia cannot be co-opted or reified by any particular perspective. The neat juxtaposition of chronos against kairos in the Tillichian reading therefore only serves a conservative utopianism that can distinguish what utopia is from what it is not by having a notion of o kairos: the eschatological end time that qualifies historical progress as teleological. So in spite of Tillich noting the contradiction of conceptualizing a time bound thought of the End of time, to read kairos as "timely" and qualified by an eschatological Christian reading is problematic, in so far as it is predicated upon a direct knowledge of the End time.72 This is why the legacy of the New Testament reading of kairos versus chronos ought to be superseded, which, moreover, would also help to reconceptualize utopia in a similar vein. My reading of akairos is commensurate with what Leston refers to as the "unhinged"— when the ability to rationally narrativize breaks down, and time is "unhinged."73 During such moments, qualitative gaps emerge which are neither chronological nor kairological. While Leston refers to such ruptures as kairological, by describing them as unhinged, they can also be associated with Boer's "ill-timed, displaced and non-harmonious" times,74 or, in effect, as akairological. In such ruptures, Leston argues, something new or alien may enter into discourse. I argue that this potential "newness" is not positively articulated but rather is a moment of an Adornian-Jamesonian recognition of the limits of rational articulation. This recognition, it can be argued, is utopia in so far as it is the good place that is no place in terms of normative discourse; in effect it is an iconoclastic reading of utopia. The echoes of the qualitative impact of this reading of utopia may be felt but cannot be positively articulated, for were such an impact articulable, it would be reform, not utopia. Iconoclastic Utopia Jacoby juxtaposes classic utopia with iconoclastic utopia. Arguing from the perspective of the Jewish tradition, with its concomitant ban on graven images, including those of an o kairological utopia in the future, Jacoby argues that iconoclastic utopia is "essential to any effort to escape the spell of the quotidian," and moreover, that it is "the prerequisite of any thinking."75 Iconoclastic utopia is thereby, as argued above, (negatively) transcendental: a condition of (im)possibility in thought, as well as practice. For Jacoby, it thus perpetually widens the parameters of possibility of the classic utopian tradition: [T]he choice we have is not between reasonable proposals and an unreasonable utopianism. Utopian thinking does not undermine or discount real reforms. Indeed, it is almost the opposite: practical reforms depend on utopian dreaming—or at least utopian thinking drives incremental improvement.76 However, in so far as the utopian is concerned with social reform, its emancipatory potential is stifled. If utopia is to involve taking up the contingent issues of the day, "it would forfeit its own commitment to a realm beyond the immediate choices."77 Yet if utopia is to be transcendent, it would also become ineffectual in that it would claim to be divorced from the very conditions that enable its intelligibility. Instead, I argue for utopia as immanent rupture that is neither prescriptive, nor transcendent. Rather, as per Jameson's analyses outlined above, utopia's

role is a critically substantive one that sheds a light on our entrapment. As akairological rupture, utopia is the moment when we realize that the ability to narrativize in a rationally articulated manner is mired in contradiction. Iconoclastic utopia as akairological rupture thus counterposes the classic interpretation of utopia. Reiterating the limits of the existing neoliberal paradigm, akairological rupture emerges within it, and, following Adorno and Jameson, highlights the limits of positive articulations. Supporting this reconceptualization of utopia, Wayne Hudson argues that no "fixed range of temporal comportments is intrinsic to utopia, just as no one knows how many different ways of conceiving time can be given a utopian deployment."78 The connotations of utopia as finality, telos, closure, death, and time of the end (as discussed by Sargisson above), are as outmoded as seeing it as an ideal future commonwealth, a "eutopia," the best place, or "euchronia," the best time.79 Utopia as akairological rupture, in contrast, occurs in any given present. Iconoclastic utopia is open-ended and nonsensical in terms of the classic utopia. Its critically substantive role can tenuously be equated with Levitas's call for a broad analytic definition of the concept, in that it represents desire for a better way. This reading of utopia is not ahistorical, but instead takes its cue from Adorno's mode of immanent critique by asserting that utopia can only be engendered as rupture amidst historically and culturally embedded normative discourse.80 12 S. DHILLON Not only does this reconceptualization challenge the dominant reading of utopia as an ideal future but it also challenges the popular notion that utopia involves a social collective. This analysis thus opposes conceptions of utopia as the teleological result of realizable material reform by either orthodox, political parliamentary democracy, or by recent grassroots movements such as Occupy. By negating normative discourse, this reading of utopia can help to negatively reveal that which does not currently exist. In other words, since there is no telos to be had, utopia is necessarily always in opposition to a given state of contingent affairs. Ultimately, through highlighting contradictions in liberal discourse and the classic view of utopia, this reading of utopia argues that it is "good to know the worst," which negative articulation is substantiated by conceiving time as akairological. My claim, then, is that akairos shapes our understanding of utopia: as we read and experience time akairologically, we necessarily reconsider utopia. This approach thus also rejects the positivist and the neoliberal reading of time, both of which curtail the possibility of a radical conception of utopia. Conclusion The main claim of this article is that utopia may be rendered akairologically, through a determinate negation of rational discourse. The central problem that remains is how utopia can be articulated in our contemporary society that is dominated by the neoliberal discourse (within which history has come to a standstill). I argued that rational articulation and reasonable discourse will yield nothing but an emasculated blueprint utopia that serves only to reproduce existing social conditions, rather than to realize that which is radically different. More specifically, I showed why both a chronological and a kairological reading of utopia would fail in a culture of reified thought.81 Akairological utopia thus withstands scrutiny as a legitimate pursuit of taking the logic of identity thinking to its limits in contradiction. Nonetheless, akairological utopia lacks efficacy in terms of guiding praxis. Akairological ruptures highlight the limitations of existing sociocultural mores in attempts—but, ultimately, in the failure—to render being wholly codifiable in a positivist manner. In terms of capitalist discourse, akairological ruptures are thus untimely untidy and unusable. It is precisely these negative qualities that serve a "positive" purpose in my Adornian-Jamesonian reading of utopia as having a critically substantive role. Thus in taking an Adornian perspective on socio-political reform, the contemporary thinker will find little to concretely guide praxis, as Levitas observes: It is all very well to say, as Adorno did, that there is tenderness only in the coarsest demand: that no-one shall go hungry any more—but honouring that has immense consequences for every aspect of social, economic and environmental organizations.82 In response to this, Levitas argues that perhaps "pace Marx, the time has come to write some menus for the cafes of the future."83 What I have argued for is the crucial importance of developing a reading of utopia that

can transcend its reified, fixed conception that seeks to domesticate it in the service of a contingent political aspiration, however noble and humanitarian it may appear to be. While concrete, piecemeal reform such as raising living wages is better than none at all, in so far as it tangibly alleviates in legislative terms at least real world suffering, it is arguably the role of utopia to demonstrate the contingency of such political reforms. Put differently, the precondition of writing menus for THE EUROPEAN LEGACY 13 the cafes of the future is an awareness of what is—and is not—possible to think today. It is thus imperative that the concept of utopia be preserved through determinate negation and not be appropriated by normative positive discourse. There is a sense in which the pursuit of akairological utopia entails a negative transcendental philosophy. Yet in highlighting the latter's limitations and contradictions, the thinker of utopia becomes aware of the need to sidestep the limits of identity thinking. My reconceptualization of utopia as akairological rupture is iconoclastic in that its indirect promulgation via determinate negation reveals it as neither positively articulable through rational discourse, as legitimately chronologically plotted out, nor as kairologically expressed with a telos in mind. The role of the contemporary thinker of utopia, then, is to keep the possibility of criticality alive by highlighting existing antinomies and contradictions. In this article, both chronological and kairological futurity have been eschewed in favour of an exacting critique of any given present, thus providing an akairological Adornian-Jamesonian reading of utopia.

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