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A Heideggerian Interpretation of Woodstock 1969: How Time and Death Instigated a Social Movement

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This investigation sets out to analyse Woodstock, 1969 upon the backdrop of the Heideggerian theme Being-towards-death. By focusing on the momentum behind the event, the importance of the festival itself crumbles and a real depth to the iconic countercultural occasion emerges. Under the yoke of nuclear terror, the countercultural movement had to carry the potentiality of their own death heavy on their shoulders. What this paper sets to argue, is that this threat of nuclear annihilation was a unique experience that led to a mass exodus towards an authentic societal model.

Circular lenses of perspective; a barefoot account of authenticity

Woodstock 1969; a circus of hedonistic debauchery, or perhaps a pursuit towards an authentic societal model? The notion of barefoot warriors, semi-nude, painted in tangerine colours carving out an *authentic* model of society, is a peculiar premise; yet, one that this investigation will discuss. This is not an attempt to exaggerate the event, or to theorise the festival itself, but to conceptualise the motifs and the framework in which the event occurred. The music festival was exactly that, a music

festival, but what is important is how the festival occurred, what held it together, and the Utopianisation surrounding the event. The fact that Bethel farm did become a beacon for a mass migration and that it did serve as a countercultural mecca is of interest. Why did 500,000 people descend onto the fields of Max Yasgur's Dairy Farm; what was the driving force behind Woodstock? To adopt Heideggerian terminology, I am interested in the *Being-towards* of Woodstock. It is through this conceptualisation that it becomes possible to deem Woodstock as a utopia, as in the Greek "ου" – "τοπία", of no-place. Through applying a historical analysis from a Heideggerian perspective, Woodstock can be understood as a culmination point of a social movements' season – developing from Port Huron (1962), crossing the Mississippi freedom summer (1964) and Berkeley free speech movement (1965) to reach the march on Washington (1968) – striving towards an authentic model of living. Although Woodstock as a utopia is not a new concept, I will discuss how the popular view of the festival as utopia, under the Thomas Moore conception of good-place¹, is devoid of the values that drew the movement to its culmination. The sensationalised simulacrum of the event has a counterintuitive component, as it cages and misappropriates the original motifs and ideals.

As I will detail throughout this investigation, Woodstock 1969 was an expression of a social and cultural movement that rejected the dominant culture. By considering the festival as a movement and engaging a Heideggerian perspective provides an opportunity to question the authenticity of human characteristics and values. The movement resulted out of a mass rejection of the dominant cultural-political environment,

¹ Thomas Moore played with the similarities between the Greek *ou* ("no place") and *eu* ("good place") when he penned his satirical reflection of English politics. This lexical juncture allows Moore to outline an idyllic society without determining the possibility of such a society. As the possibility of Utopia became interpretable, the meaning of the concept oscillated between *ou* and *eu*. It was thus that from 1516 Utopia became possible.

and Woodstock was, for many, a harmonious possibility of a new community approach; “an Aquarian Exposition: 3 Days of Peace & Music”, as it was famously dubbed. Yet what characterises this movement as unique is its historical positioning within the Cold era. The political climate, particularly the nuclear arms race, forced the possibility of individual lives into a precarious state, which led to the conceptualisation of what it means to Be to incur a paradigmatic shift. Using the tools that Martin Heidegger has given us, I will question the implications that this shift had upon individual and social authenticity. For Heidegger, taking an existential understanding into the potentiality of death provides an opportunity to release the baggage of *The-They* and to engage more succinctly with the Self. In other words, engaging with the possibility of death provides an avenue to *Be-towards* authenticity. By contextualising Heideggerian principles of authenticity I want to draw attention to how Woodstock had the capacity to give voice to the aspirations of an authentic society. It is important to stress that I am not claiming Woodstock was a social model, but an utopia of a model. The festival represented the trajectory of the countercultural social possibility, but when the movement eventually arrived at the Dairy Farm, the potentiality of the movement had diminished. The actualisation of the event meant that the movement was no longer *Being-towards* the potential of an authentic societal model. This is a fundamental Heideggerian concept and is of paramount importance. This investigation is a conceptualisation of Woodstock as a social and cultural movement², rather than an investigation of Woodstock itself. Critiquing this event

² Dieter Rucht’s defines a social movement as being “a network of individuals, groups and organizations that, based on a sense of collective identity, seek to bring about social change (or resist social change) primarily by means of collective public protest” (sourced Rucht 2017, 45). For Woodstock, the critical element is the network of individuals who sought an alternative society. This focus upon society as a whole, rather than something *in* society coincides with Rucht’s outline of what defines a social movement.

as a culmination of a social movement provides the possibility to seek value within our current epoch, fifty years after the event.

The environment of the Cold climate

The theoretical principles that drove the social movement of Woodstock can be best understood through the political environment of the period, the critical component of which being the Cold climate; the metaphorical assimilation of nuclear threat which stood for both war and peace at the same time (Grant and Ziemann 2016, 2). Warfare was thus an appropriation of peace; “the Bomb” being the signifier of the horror if the war was to ever become hot. Of course, in 1969 this was not a new issue. The presence of nuclear capacity had shadowed the globe since 1945 with the bombing of Hiroshima. The rippling effect that 6 August 1945 had was that it instigated a new awareness, a new fragility to life. It is for this reason that Arthur Koestler marks this date as the most important date in history. He writes:

From the dawn of consciousness until 6 August 1945, man had to live with the prospect of his death as an individual; since the day when the first atomic bomb outshone the sun over Hiroshima, mankind as a whole has had to live with the prospect of its extinction as a species (Boyer 2016, 75).

Politically, Hiroshima served as a presentation of power, and the capacity for annihilation became a doctrine for social incarceration. As George Orwell commented, the difficulty and expense of replicating the atomic bomb can only lead to a reduction of power into the hands of a few; perhaps to only two or three nations, the political implication being that the imbalances of power can no longer be tampered (Orwell 1945). The nuclear bomb eliminated the possibility of revolt yet paradoxically the consequences of this force left those in power in a stalemate. Peace therefore had been established through the precarity

of potential warfare. The atomic bomb, to quote Orwell, “is likelier to put an end to large-scale wars at the cost of prolonging indefinitely a ‘peace that is no peace’” (ibid.). 1 March, 1954 further exaggerated this paradox as the testing of the Hydrogen Bomb clearly displayed technological capacities that knew no ends. As Lewis Strauss, the AEC chair, declared the H-Bomb could be made “as large as you wish... large enough to take out a city... any city” (Wittner 1997, 3). From 1954, not only was nuclear capacity a presentation of power, it was also a technology that both Soviet and US governments were showing a willingness to use. In a bid to justify the holding of nuclear weapons and to obtain public acceptance for the implementation of such might, Dwight Eisenhower defined atomic weapons as “conventional”, stating that the US government would employ tactical nuclear weapons “just exactly as you would use a bullet” in a battlefield situation. Likewise, Soviet officials were showing a willingness to engage in nuclear warfare, if they felt it was necessary (ibid.).

With this willingness, 1954 brought the Cold climate into a new cycle³, categorised by enlarged nuclear capacities and a willingness to deploy. The conditions of this new age promoted a unitedness that transcended the political divide of the iron curtain. This transcendence, this drive, towards unity was present throughout the cycle at different times, by different figures, by different movements. To reference just a few, Bertrand Russell and the World Federation of Scientific Workers were highly prominent in 1954 and in 1956. Pope Pious XII, in 1954, was publicly critiquing the new capacities of violence (ivi, 5-6). During 1957-58 there were surges of Ban-the-Bomb movements, where the

³ As Paul Boyer details, the historiographical narrative of nuclear response can be broadly categorised into three cycles. Each cycle consisting of three stages; political activism, cultural expression and diminished attention. The second cycle in which we are analysing Boyer outlines as from the mid-1950s to the late 1970s. As this analysis is of Woodstock I will focus solely up to the events of 1969 and not to the late 1970s, which according to Boyers framework is a period of diminished attention. For a detailed account of all three stages see, (Boyer 2016, 76)

rhetoric could be heard echoing around the globe (ivi, chapter 2 and 3). Tom Hayden and the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) published the *Port Huron Statement* in 1962 with the opening lines describing life with the Bomb; an awareness that “millions of abstract ‘others’”, all whom share a common peril, and whom death could strike at any time (Hayden 1964, 1). For Todd Gitlin, popular music served as a strong indicator of the cultural environment, stating that “nothing put the category *youth* on [his] political map more resoundingly than a song called *Eve of Destruction*, released August 1965 (Gitlin 1993, 195), with lyrics such as “When the button is pushed there’s no runnin’ away/ There’ll be no one to save with the world in a grave” (McGuire 1965). Yet, what is truly being underlined is that the national powers had forsaken their citizens, the value of humanity had been thrust into precarity under the pretence of war. A war that, for the young generation, had been adopted; born into. Both Tom Hayden and Hannah Arendt stress this fact. A statement from the Port Huron declaration reads:

We are people of this generation, bred in at least modest comfort, housed now in universities, looking uncomfortably to the world we inherit. When we were kids the United States was the wealthiest and strongest country in the world; the only one with the atom bomb. As we grew, however, our comfort was penetrated by events too troubling to dismiss (Hayden 1964, 1).

While Hannah Arendt, commented some years later:

The pathos and the élan of the New Left, their credibility as it were, are closely connected with the weird suicidal development of modern weapons; this is the first generation that grew up under the massive intrusion of criminal violence into politics – they learned in high school and in college about concentration and extermination camps, about genocide and torture, about the wholesale slaughter of civilians in war, without which modern military operations are no longer possible even if they remain restricted to “conventional” weapons (Arendt 1969).

This was a generation thrust into an age that was dictated by the potentiality of death. Through childhood, this generation had been reared with the Homefront's effort to prepare the youth to be ready for nuclear attacks, an indoctrinated awareness of the threat-at-hand (Boyer 2016, 79). All throughout American high schools', preparation was put in place that the Bomb could strike at any moment, without warning: "Be like Bert, duck and cover and do it fast" (Rizzo 1951). It can thus be said that the political implications of Hiroshima were just as present after 1954 as they were in 1945. The reflections of George Orwell are therefore just as relevant when he stated:

The atomic bomb may complete the process [of abolishing frontiers] by robbing the exploited classes and people of all power to revolt, and at the same time putting the possessors of the bomb on a basis of military equality (Orwell 1945).

Structurally the possibility to alter and redefine power became implausible. This is not to say protests and revolts were not possible, it was just they were caged within the structures already defined by those in possession of the Bomb. Yet the possessors of the Bomb were also at servitude to their very own capacities, as the 1962 Cuban missile crisis demonstrates with both US and Soviet forces teetering on the brink of deployment. Fearing that an US attack on Cuba was imminent, Fidel Castro wrote to Nikita Khrushchev proposing the Soviet should carry out the first nuclear strike (Stern 2005, 157). Yet, after John F. Kennedy declared any nuclear weapon launched from Cuba would be deemed an attack from Soviet Russia (Kennedy 1962), Khrushchev responded to Castro's plea that if the Soviet were to strike it would initiate a "thermonuclear world war" (Stern 2005, 157). Thus, both powers were subject to the will of their nuclear capacity and aware of the dire consequences of their strength. Tom Hayden rightly defined the missile crisis as a conundrum, because "unless we [the US] as a national entity can convince Russia that we are willing to commit the most heinous action in human history, we will be forced to commit it" (Hayden 1964, 7).

The irony is that national power had become subject to the will of the very violence they had created. And in no circumstances could the deployment of the Bomb be justified in armed conflict. Arendt depicted the situation as an “apocalyptic chess game” because if either player “won” it would be the end of both; the only rational outcome could be mutual deterrence (Arendt 1969). A vivid allegory of the climate.

Arendt’s experience of the Cold climate gave her insight into the capability that violence had to supersede power. Her analysis of the nuclear paradox that the Cold instilled led her to conclude that power and violence were divisible; “where one rules absolutely, the other is absent” (Arendt 1969). The impact of this division provoked the opportunity to rebel, and Orwell’s social incarceration was able to be skirted as the violence of the Bomb was visibly the absolute ruler of their time, rendering the power of government a subject to violence. Arendt delved deeper and concluded that violence is instrumental and will always require justification – it is not possible for violence to be the essence of anything, let alone be the essence of government. This Arendt expresses is, and can only be, power (Arendt 1965). This distinction is vital as by reducing violence and power to their raw concepts, Arendt signifies that what is of importance is the power behind the violence. Nuclear technology conceptually has no power. In fact, the sheer capacity of nuclear technology is having a detrimental effect upon power, such dominant violence erodes power, and “when power has disintegrated revolutions are possible” (Arendt 1965). It is precisely this reasoning that led the SDS to conclude that the Cold war should be reconsidered as an international civil war:

Ironically, the war which seems so close will not be fought between the United States and Russia, not externally between two national entities, but as an international civil war throughout the unrespected and unprotected *civitas* which spans the world (Hayden 1964).

Engaging the perspective of the Cold war as an international civil war results in the political response to shift, adopting new grounds both

ideologically and spatially. The very nuclear threat that robbed the exploited classes of the possibility to revolt, was an act of violence. This violence, this threat of nullity, was in fact life-affirming⁴. It is precisely this notion, this potentiality of death, specifically within a collective, that can be harnessed as a political tool. It is this willing to live, this threat of death that is unique to the Cold climate. The prominence of violence had left individuals conditioned by a theoretical civil war. This conceptual war, yet not war, is a unifying characteristic which transcends national borders and national politics. All are equal under the threat of annihilation. Arendt details the uniqueness of this phenomena:

No body politic I know of was ever founded on the equality before death and its actualization in violence, but it is undeniably true that the strong fraternal sentiments, engendered by collective violence, have misled many good people into the hope that a new community together with a “new man” will arise out of it. The hope is an illusion for the simple reason that no human relationship is more transitory than this kind of brotherhood, which can be actualized only under conditions of immediate danger to life (Arendt 1965).

The conditioning of death is ethereal; the state of resistance under the climate of potential death is not a permanent condition. It is only possible, therefore, that if the conditioning is ethereal, so is the outcome and the result. As Arendt writes, the “new man” that is hoped for will not arise, but what this “new man” represents is highly telling due to the conditioning in which he was conceived. What is of interest are the values that were being sought. As Arendt rightly states, when considering violence in its raw form, as instrumental, the life affirming principles are not new. Nietzsche has taught us this within the human condition (Nietzsche 2003); Sorel and Marx depict violence as a fuel to stoke revolution (Marx 1996), and Fanon has argued that to revolt with

⁴ A recurring theme throughout Friedrich Nietzsche’s works.

the use of violence would re-awaken the immortality of the group to which we belong (Fanon 2001). Yet, the atomic era, the generation raised under the pretence of violence, have been conditioned by a new form of violence; an ever-present potential of war. This new form of violence can, thus, be related and deconstructed through Heideggerian concepts, as violence has morphed from life-affirming to death-defining. Nuclear violence is beyond violence, it is annihilation. It is the climate of potentiality of death that is one of the most influential issues that shaped and led movements throughout the nuclear era. The political response from activists such as the SDS were promoting activism through non-conformity by merely not cooperating. This resonates with Étienne De La Boétie's writing on obedience when he states "you can deliver yourselves if you try, not by taking action, but merely by willing to be free. Resolve to serve no more, and you are at once freed" (De La Boétie 1975, 48). It was this form of action that characterised resistance, and if Arendt's stance is that technology has led man into the realms of irrationality (Arendt 1970), then to be rational is to separate, and to seek alternatives. Therefore the countercultural movement could be conceived as a rational movement. The Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) illustrate this conception and the values that should be embodied in driving the movement in great depth within *The Port Huron Statement*. Here is an excerpt:

We regard *men* as infinitely precious and possessed of *unfulfilled capacities* for reason, freedom, and love. In affirming these principles we are aware of countering perhaps the dominant conceptions of man in the twentieth century: that he is a thing to be manipulated, and that he is inherently incapable of directing his own affairs. [...] Men have *unrealized potential* for self-cultivation, self-direction, self-understanding, and creativity. It is this potential that we regard as crucial and to which we appeal, not to the human potentiality for violence, unreason, and submission to authority. The goal of man and society should be human independence: a concern not with image of popularity but with finding a meaning in life that is *personally authentic*. [...] this kind of independence does not mean egotistic individualism – the object is not to

have one's way so much as it is to have a way that is one's own. Nor do we deify man – we merely have faith in his potential (Hayden 1964)⁵.

It as if Heidegger himself had written this tract, a doctrine emphasising the possibilities of unfulfilled potential: “Personal authenticity” as the guide for social order. This principle is in complete rejection of the irrationality of a violence that has superseded power, it is a call to look internally at what it means to Be and to use this inward journey to reflect upon the community in which that one is placed. Social activism thus took a new turn, a new perspective. Under the precarity of nuclear threat, a new counterculture was emerging that was in tune with the SDS's rhetoric, exaggerated by the Vietnam war, in particular the draft; the generation were fracturing further and further from society. In the middle of the 1960s it became very clear that this generation were left with three choices: to fight in a war that they perhaps believed was immoral and illegal; to go to prison if they avoided the draft, or evade both prison and the war (Foley 2003, 13). For many, the latter served as a driving force for the countercultural movement of 1969. As one Berkeley student explains, “the hippie culture didn't want anything to do with the culture. The culture was sick” (Kitchell 1990).

The image of the new community

Nihilism is an easy image to conjure up when considering the countercultural community. And why not? The Hydrogen Bomb-shaped shadow was wide stretching and the ultimate leveller; as mentioned before, the youth of 1965 were on the *Eve of Destruction*. But what came out of the post 1954 era was great social change, a drive towards equality and justice. The potential of death had spurred great movement. Berkeley University, for instance, had become recognised as a catalyst for

⁵ The emphasis added is my own.

social change after the police shutdown of the 1960 student protest. Ironically the police footage of “operation abolition” designed to deter further protests in fact instigated a rallying call. Through the use of film, the event became sensationalised and witnessed across the Country (Kitchell 1990). Berkeley, more specifically the student union group SLATE⁶, continued to instigate protests with free speech as a focal motif and political aim of the group. Gaining large rapport and later affiliating themselves with the Black Panthers, the student group gathered a lot of momentum⁷. Another group that formed in response to the Bomb was the national committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy – SANE – establishing in 1957, who stated that “the great ‘of the challenge age’ is to move beyond the traditional interests of the nation-state to a ‘higher loyalty’ – a loyalty ‘to the human community’” (Wittner 1997, 53). Furthermore, stemming from SANE, the Non-Violent Action Against Nuclear Weapons – NVAANW –, embarked on a voyage to the US nuclear testing zone in protest under the sails of the Golden Rule, in 1958. What needs to be taken from both SANE and NVAANW is the public response and attention they raised. The tens of thousands who banded behind these groups sent a clear message of action in the face of nihilism (ivi, 55–58).

Woodstock as a movement was not a new phenomenon in the sense of expression but was a hyperexpression of a counterculture. This is not the place to go into great depth of the counterculture throughout the period, yet to briefly illustrate a few of the unconventional expressions and outrages that were being experienced, in particular the role of psychedelic drugs. The Acid Test, for instance, was an experiment led by Ken Kesey, author of *One Flew Over the Cuckoo’s Nest*, and his band

⁶ SLATE – meaning a “slate” of candidates running on the same level.

⁷ To continue down the path of Civil Rights movements would deter from the main theme of this paper, yet the Civil Rights movements are an important character of the period and are entwined with the growing resentment of the power in place.

of Merry Pranksters sailed across America (1965–66) in a school bus painted in “Day Glow”, inviting anyone to try and “pass the Acid Test” (Wolfe 1968). On the other side of the Atlantic, and more famously than Kesey’s escapade, The Beatles, under the influence of psychedelics, embarked on their *Magical Mystery Tour* (1967). Back in the US it was not just Ken Kesey experimenting with Acid Tests: Timothy Leary was another prominent figure, a psychologist adamant about the beneficial capabilities of LSD. Slightly later, in 1971, on a more individual journey Hunter S. Thompson released his best-selling semi-biographical account *Fear and loathing in Las Vegas*. The popularity and influence of psychedelic drugs were prominent during the era and greatly influenced the countercultural movements. The Trips Festival, held in 1967, was one such event which centred around a community of participators of LSD (Wolfe 1968). Also in 1967, in San Francisco, the Human Be-Ins were held with figures such as Allen Ginsberg promoting self-reflections and referring to politics as just a “bummer” (Gitlin 1993, 208). There was an experience of shifting away from the dominant culture to form new groups – circles as Gitlin defines them, where “the point was to open up a new space, an *inner* space, so that we could *space out*, live for the sheer exultant of living” (ivi, 202).

What is important is that the politics of the era and the technological advancements of nuclear power provided an avenue for the counterculture to revolt in a De Boittein sense of non-conformity and a willingness to be free. Experimentation and a drive towards unity and “interconnectivity” through community living, psychedelic drugs, music and expression set the motion for Woodstock. The preamble up to 1969 was of a similar vein although was a more fractured experience and of a smaller scale. Woodstock therefore was not unique of the time but represented a large-scale manifestation of the motives and direction that the countercultural movement was taking. As I have been emphasising, it is not the event itself, yet the direction and the motives behind it which are important. It is by evaluating these motifs

that we can see that the movement reflects authenticity through appropriating the Heideggerian theme of Being-towards in the context of Woodstock 1969. As has been illustrated there are many markers of Heidegger's philosophy that bear relation to both the Cold climate and the counterculture; yet it is this particular thread which is of paramount importance as we shall see.

Philosophical underpinning

To take a Heideggerian consideration of the Cold climate, is to go beyond the political and to consider the theoretical implications of the nuclear arms race. As we have detailed, nuclear technology has led to a concretion of political power, which, as a result, solidified morality within the grasp of the dominant power. This is important because when we consider a rejection of the political, we are also rejecting the moral. This rejection is conceptually possible because morality is within the essence of government, whereas violence can only be an instrument of power. Therefore, the capacities of violence are not immoral, it is only the power behind it. This relationship between power and morality will be the first engagement within this section. The second element that will be addressed is time. Nuclear warfare stood for potential annihilation, thus an uncertainty of the future. Time ultimately has taken another form; the projection of the future has been brought into the present. Through engaging with this template of time I will argue that Heidegger's concept of Being-towards authenticity emerges.

The first consideration that needs to be made is, what is human telos? The answer has no common consensus. How then is it possible to form any basis of moral judgement and ethical theories if there is no teleological understanding of Being? With no understanding of purpose, what then should we base moral judgement on? As history dictates, affixing morality to either science or religion has often re-

sulted in atrocities; morality serving as a tool for the dominant power to justify their actions. In this sense “rights” begin to take the form of fiction; ethics a construct of the epoch (Zimmerman 1985, 43–44). To overcome this, Alister MacIntyre proposed that morality should be grounded in virtuous practices which are designed and executed communally in order to promote human telos. A concept that Heidegger supports, declaring “ontology proceeds ethics” (quoted in Zimmerman 1985, 47). MacIntyre further writes that our moral confusion can only be cured by forming new communities which develop virtuous practices to promote a communally agreed-upon human telos (ibid.). It is precisely within this context that the countercultural movement can be determined as a drive towards a community based moral standard which is based upon a teleological consensus. Yet this consensus was not implicitly in motion but was imminently present. The social movement thus was the mobility of individualistic endeavours of the same communally understood telos. As the SDS wrote, “the goal of man and society should be human independence... with finding a meaning in life that is personally authentic” (Hayden 1964, 6). Woodstock 1969 within this framework can be recognised as a rallying call for this social movement. Yet of course, this raises some contention due to this common consensus not being implicit. It is thus this new perspective of precarity and potentiality that should be considered to bring to light the values of the movement. This existential conceptualisation of the potentiality of death for Heidegger provides a possibility for that given individual to be positioned *towards-authenticity*. It is precisely this concept that bound a great number of individuals, who would not have otherwise been connected. Yet they all shared a common rejection and disjunction of their future.

This also challenged time. Time began to change in form, new perceptions emerged as the concept of future was under threat. Foundational-ly time is interlinked to humankind, as Aristotle writes in *Physics*, “time could not be if the soul were not”. Time is understood through Being

and Being through time; Being and time are intrinsically and intangibly bound. For Heidegger, the very foundation of human essence is structured upon two conditional principles; to be present and constant (Heidegger 2002, 80). If these two requirements are not met, there is no “is”. The intangibility of Being and time are therefore indivisible. “Time is not to be found somewhere or other like a thing among things, but in ourselves” (ibid.). With this strict interaction between time and Being, an influencing factor upon the perceptions of time will also impact perceptions of Being. So, the prospect of a non-future, is at the same time a prospect of non-Being. The Cold climate with the potentiality of nullity, brought to light philosophical contemplation of the temporality of Being. This existential contemplation of the possibility of non-Being for Heidegger provides insight into the possibility of fulfilment, or for Being-towards authenticity. He writes:

Ending, as Being-towards-the-end, must be clarified ontologically in terms of Dasein’s kind of Being. And presumably the possibility of an existent Being of that “not-yet” which lies “before” the “end”, will become intelligible only if the character of ending has been determined existentially (Heidegger 1962, 289).

The key component Heidegger is expressing, is the understanding of the not-yet Being, the potential of Being before the end. This conceptualisation illuminates that whilst alive, a Being is not whole; there is a part of Being that belongs in the future, in the Being-towards death (ivi, 276). Therefore, teleological understanding of Being can only happen after death, upon when the Being is whole. But of course, this understanding is not possible because the Being will be no more. So, it is only within the existential conception of the end, that an understanding of potential Being is recognisable. The Cold climate through rupturing the stability of future time ultimately brought a new perspective of Being. This conceptualisation of death thus becomes a critical tool to question authenticity, being that “death is the possibility of the ab-

solute impossibility of Dasein⁸” (ivi, 294). To invert this, what is the possibility of Being? Or as Heidegger details, “with death, Dasein stands before itself in its ownmost potentiality of Being” (ibid.). Through conceptualising death, the potential for becoming that Being becomes present. This is authenticity for Heidegger. Yet a Being can only be authentic towards their not Being; authenticity can never be fulfilled because there will always be an outstanding Being. Authenticity therefore is the potentiality of that life.

Authenticity remains within the individual, just as much as an Other cannot live another’s life, authenticity cannot be replicated (ivi, 286). Which is why the social movement culminating in Woodstock 1969 is of such relevance, as it was a movement that rejected the current culture, whilst being comprised of individuals who had teleological assemblage due to the pressures of the Cold climate. This assemblage may be comprised of individuals, yet the societal authentic model that Woodstock stood for was a collective pursuit. This is because Being and Space are intrinsically linked. Jacob Golomb details this further:

Dasein’s mode of Being-in-the-world is not simply that of a fly in a bottle or a subject confronting an objective world, but that of an entity intimately immersed in it. *Dasein’s* world is of its making. In turn, it constitutes *Dasein’s* experiences, endowing them with meaning. I dwell “within the world as projected by me”. To find my self through the world, I have to stand away (*exstare*) from it, but (and this is a crucial ‘but’) I must return to it and accept it as my “homeland”. This is the return of the *Sein* to *Da* (its world) after it has lost or abandoned it (Golomb 1995, 97)

Golomb’s investigation of *Being and Time* concisely draws out the necessity of Being-with. Dasein and its world are both inherently inter-

⁸ Dasein is an entity that is conscious of its own existence. It is a Being that asks, “What is Being?”

“The term ‘existence’ formally indicates that Dasein *is* as an understanding potentiality-for-Being, which, in its Being, makes an issue of that Being itself (Heidegger 1962, 274).

linked; the world constructs Being, just as much as Being constructs the world. There is a binding factor to Being-with-others that all are a part of a time and space. Authenticity maintains an individual engagement, yet this engagement is not possible outside of the Beings social environment, which is constructed by Others (ivi, 98). Yet, as Golomb identifies, the balance between authentic Being and sense of the world, is a delicate balance (ivi, 99). It becomes easy to become absorbed by the world and succumbed to the anyone, ceasing to be owner and master of the Self. Beings who have been absorbed by the world become owned by the public and available for manipulation (ivi, 100). This lack of self-ownership can be recognised in 1969 in the form of the draft. As mentioned previously the generation had only three choices. Self-ownership therefore became a sanction of the state. Woodstock thus stood for a creation of a subjectively objective social structure.

It is through critically analysing the influence of living within a nuclear climate that the depth of the social movement's motifs become truly illuminated. Through the destruction of future oriented time, the potential of towards-Being were brought into the perceptions of the present. Woodstock thus stood for a recreation of a social model that was driven by the conceptualisation of individual authenticity, due to the concept of Being-with, this also reflects the structural authenticity of the movement. The rejection of the current model entailed the rejection of fictional morality and a new communitarian model was emphatically desired. This collective rejection can be recognised within the mood of the festival. The particular performance that typified this was Jimi Hendrix's *Star-Spangled Banners*. Through a lyric-less interpretation and a distorted guitar, Hendrix was able to stage a protest to the ongoing war in Vietnam (Gracyk 2013, 28). Through utilizing the atmosphere in the audience, Hendrix was able to create a semantic protest through an abstract performance, the resulting message was clear and deeply profound. This performance was entirely reliant on both time and space.

Tarnished Utopia

As has been stressed within the Heideggerian concept of Being-towards, authenticity is a process of arriving in the not-yet. This motion can be understood as Utopia, the projection of a non-place. The value therefore in Utopia is the journey; the destination does not exist. Holger Nehring understands this conception of utopia and structures his basis of peace, and peace movements as a directional discourse. He writes, ““peace” thus developed into a utopia, very much in the original sense of a “non-place”, it became a “project rather than an ongoing experience”” (Nehring 2017, 489). This is very much in line with an analysis of Woodstock, as its motifs were centred around peace, and thus when considering Nehring’s writing on peace movements as an ongoing experience⁹, the Heideggerian conception of *Being-Towards* becomes recognised as a practice. It is thus that when considering peace movements as unable to come to fruition, the event of Woodstock itself becomes banal compared to its momentum. Woodstock represents the utopian no-place. The critical issue with utopianising the event is to not take the festival as the Thomas Moore’s conception of good-place, which is precisely what the sensationalism surrounding the festival has done, but to take the Greek conception of no-place.

Woodstock is often regarded as a “glimpse of one generation’s utopian dream come momentarily true” (Kintner 2006, 5). Yet as many critics have revealed, the glorification of the festival often came from those who did not attend the event. There is a distinctive divide in opinions from those who attended and those who did not. Joni Mitchell spoke about this separation and understood that if she had attended the festi-

⁹ Holger Nehring has written extensively on the Cold war and provides valuable insight into the period and the Self-world relationship within the Cold climate. For the purpose of conceptualising Woodstock as an utopia I have adopted his relationship between peace movements and utopia. The magnitude of his contribution to this topic cannot be ignored, so I have included further works within the bibliography that are in direct relation to this topic.

val, her song *Woodstock* would have likely been very different (ibid.). Whereas one attendee writes that, “when people say it was great, I know they saw the movie and they weren’t at the gig” (Kitts 2009, 722). Neil Young also commented that the festival was contrived and set up for the cameras – “everyone was on the Hollywood trip” (ibid.). The filmographic record of the event has created the festival as a simulacrum. This documentation has created a nostalgic representation of the event, it has reified the countercultural utopian end-goal, which of course was not the trajectory as the true values lie in the direction to the no-place. This reification of the event has frozen the festival, but only a whisper of the ideals. As Thomas Kitts highlights:

Whatever the motif and, however, temporary and contrived rock music festivals [are, they] strive to present images of freedom with their at least anticipated open spaces, seeming anarchic, and expected utopian communities (ivi, 717).

It is important to bear in mind, that the documentary of *Woodstock* was primarily there to record the festival. The motifs and mood of the event have been captured as a representation of the festival itself and not of the wider philosophical undercurrents and it is through the dissemination of the movie that further reinforces the simulacrum due to the nostalgia it invokes. But it needs to be remembered that “utopia fiction always arises from outside, not within a utopian system” (Kintner 2006, 5). Utopia does not exist.

The capturing of a reified utopia through media also has a spatial dimension. I am thinking of Reinhart Koselleck’s notion of *Zeitschichten* (layers of time), with the way in which the interpretation of a past phenomenon depends upon the temporal dimension of the observer (ibid.). Through time, the nostalgia towards the space of *Woodstock* exemplified as the reification of utopia, has been rooted into the very space it stood. It is for this reason, this layering of time upon the simulacrum of Utopia, that has maintained the image of *Woodstock* with such vigour, and that has entwined the utopic ideals to the space itself.

Contemporary Bethel, New York, is a prime example of a contemporary space which is highly influenced by a historic experience.

Conclusion

The counterculture of the 1960s rejected the current epoch and was in search for individual authenticity. The cultural rejection was that of the moral framework, and the immoral war being waged (Wadleigh 1970). The Cold climate of the nuclear arms race created a precarity to future orientated time. Nuclear technology put any future possibilities at risk, which ultimately revealed the capacity of authenticity. This authenticity was not actualised but can be understood through potentiality and of *Being-towards*. As Heidegger stresses:

Being-towards-death is the anticipation of a potentiality-for-Being of that entity whose kind of Being is anticipation itself. In the anticipatory revealing of this potentiality-for-Being, Dasein discloses itself to itself as regards to its uttermost possibility. But to project itself on its ownmost potentiality-for-Being means to be able to understand itself in the Being of the entity so revealed – namely, to exist (Heidegger 1962, 307)

When comparing Heidegger's theorem of potentiality to the social movement culminating in Woodstock 1969, the discourse and ideals laid forth within this potential are of great significance. Through this conception, the movement was founded by a pursuit for an authentic model, even without consensus, and the climate of forced temporality reveals the movement to emulate Heideggerian potentiality. The relationship between Heidegger and Woodstock is therefore very telling regarding innate human characteristics. What needs to be discouraged is to focus on the event itself. When the simulacrum carved out by memory and representations, the glorification diminishes the true values of the movement. Woodstock stands for the rejection of the dominant

culture, a pursuit towards a collective conception of telos and ultimately an authentic model of society. In this sense Woodstock did not happen. Robert Paul Blumenstein reflects this sentiment as he describes the anticipation he felt building up to the “pilgrimage” to Woodstock that he was stopped from undertaking. He writes,

I wonder, if I have held so fastidiously onto a dream of peace and love, that I might have only done so because I *didn't* go to Woodstock. Maybe the trip to Woodstock wasn't all in my mind like my acid-dropping friends experienced; maybe it was all in my heart' (Blumenstein 2009, 96).

He was not alone with these sentiments, as John Northlake writes how the music was integral to his generation's lives, it was a reflection of their experience of Being and was far removed from the music of previous generations that represented nostalgia of past that no longer comported to his time. As Northlake writes,

our music was an essential part of our lives. It defined us as a moment, a unique culture that was for us and no one else. It was like a secret language, unbeknownst to the elders (quoted in Blumenstein 2009, 50).

Yet, Michael Lang succinctly captures the essence of the movement when he writes:

Woodstock came to symbolize our solidarity... Over the August weekend, during a very tumultuous time in our country, we showed the best of ourselves, and in the process created the kind of society we all aspired to, even if only for a brief moment. The time was right, the place was right, the spirit was right, and we were right. What resulted was a celebration and confirmation of our humanity – one of the few instances in history, to my knowledge, when joy became big news (Lang 2009, 14).

Woodstock 1969 served as a Mecca, a beacon for rejecting the dominant culture, and the voyage to the banks of Yasgur's Dairy Farm is often cited as a “pilgrimage” for peace. Yet, the social movement towards peace never actualised; the music festival did, but the social model did

not. By taking a Heideggerian perspective to Woodstock 1969 illuminates how the driving force behind the event harbours a unique insight into the potentiality of social authenticity.

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