UTOPIA IN MUSIC AND ITS INFLUENCE ON POLITICAL BELIEFS

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> "None of the abstract concepts comes closer to fulfill
> utopia than that of eternal peace"[1]
> Theodor W. Adorno

Abstract: The aim of this article is to understand to which extent musicians rely on the imagination of the utopian/dystopian universe in 20th century popular music and how it politically influences the listeners. Firstly, we will explore the philosophical world in order to understand the link between music philosophy and utopia, secondly, we will investigate what is the political message behind these utopias and how they are musically expressed. Finally, we will try to understand how it could politically impact the listeners. We observe that this influence depends of the musical expression of utopian thought, if the musicians express the utopian universe in an "elusive" perspective the interpretation of the utopia will be different than a utopian universe presented in a "concrete" perspective.

Keywords: Music, Politics, Musical philosophy, Utopia, Dystopia, Belief.

Introduction

Utopia describes, "a fictional universe, usually a society that is ideal, but which, failing to agree sufficiently with the conditions of reality, is destined to always remain in the dream state"[2].

In the current pandemic situation during which this article is written, it seems that we need more than ever to refer to the concept of "utopia": in order to imagine the post-covid world our capacity to project ourselves in what we consider "an ideal" world will be a determinant. In these trying times, our imagination is also our best ally, it allows us to cope with the present and to imagine a world where human contacts are not deadly.

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*Ricercatore - Université de Montréal.
[1]Theodor Adorno, *Minima moralia: Reflections on a damaged life*, Verso, London 2005, p. 26.
[2] Lyman Tower, *The three faces of utopianism revisited*, "Utopian studies", vol. 5, 1994, pp. 1-37.

However, philosophers did not wait for a global pandemic to imagine the best possible outcome. One of the early appearances of "utopianism" can be traced back to the *Republic* of Plato in which Socrates imagines an ideal society based on an egalitarian city rules by philosophers[3]. However, the concept will be fully defined and constructed in the 1516 by Thomas Moore in his masterpiece *Utopia*[4]. The concept of *utopia* is often opposed to the idea of a *dystopia*, which is "an imaginative society contrary to the ideal, for instance a society organized to crush the individual is considered as dystopian"[5]. We will therefore use both terms, *utopia* to refer to the best possible society and *dystopia* to the worst possible society.

One of the underlying assumptions around each utopia/dystopia is the existence of an ideal or harmful political system that would allow these dreams to be fulfilled. Historically several utopianist movements are solely based on the imagination of a political ideal such as Fourierism, the Icarians and the Owenism which are examples of "political utopia" based on egalitarianism ideals[6]. On the political implication of the Icarians, Etienne Cabet wrote:

> Utopias and other models of government, based on the public good, maybe inconceivable because of the disordered humans […]. But even though we find it impossible, they are ridiculous to sinful people whose sense of self-destruction prevents them from believing[7].

Through this quote Cabet underlined that the ultimate end of the utopia is not its realization but its capacity to stimulate the imagination and through this process also highlight the current political issues. Furthermore, it seems that the utopian thought stimulates the imagination of artists of different fields (literature, painting, music). For instance, in the 20th century the concept of dystopia was very popular among writers particularly in science fiction with books such as *Brave New World* (1930) by Aldous Huxley or *1984* (1948) by

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[3] Neumann Harry, *Plato's Republic: Utopia or Dystopia?*, "The Modern Schoolman", vol. 44, 1967, pp. 319-330.

[4] Fátima Viera, *The concept of utopia*, "The Cambridge companion to utopian literature", 2010, pp. 3-27.

[5] Gregory Claeys, *News from somewhere: Enhanced sociability and the composite definition of utopia and dystopia*, "History", 2013, pp. 145-173.

[6] Kumar Krishan, *Utopian thought and communal practice: Robert Owen and the Owenite communities*, "Theory and Society", vol. 1, 1990, pp. 1-35.

[7] Roberts Leslie, *Etienne Cabet and his voyage en Icarie,* 1840, "Utopian studies", 1991, pp. 77-94.

George Orwell. These works are often based on an infamous political system where society is dominated by dictators whose objective is the total conformity of the population towards the laws and the state. Moreover, they also had a significant impact on the 20th century political belief [8]. We also find trace of utopia in other arts such as the architecture (*Tower of Babel*, in Iraq), the cinema (*Metropolis* from Fritz Lang, 1927) or even in painting (*Ossification prématurée d'une gare* from Salvador Dalí, 1930).

However, despite the importance of the utopian thought in art, we rarely observed how the association of music and utopia impacted the political reflexion. One particularity of utopianism in music is the idea that the utopia does not exist in itself and is part of an artistic project. This tension between the artistic project and the imagination of the ideal could impact the perception of the utopia[9]. Moreover, music, and especially popular music in the 20th century, reached a wide audience which has been rarely exposed to utopianism before, we therefore, wonder how it impacted the political thought of this new audience.

In order to understand how the use of utopianism in music influences the political thought of the listeners, we will first explore how philosophers and musicians referred to utopias. Then we will seek to understand how the Utopians thoughts are treated in the song and by which means.

Philosophical reflections on the impact of music on politics
In this paragraph we will examine some reflections by philosophers who had already questioned the music-political link and positively expressed themselves on the ability of music to influence political beliefs[10]. If we look at a classic philosopher like Plato, we can observe how he anticipated many future reflections about music influence on political attitudes. A passage of *Republic* says:

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[8] Matthew Benjamin Cole, *Dystopia and Political Imagination in the Twentieth Century*, Duke University, Durham 2017.

[9] On the tension of the musical advent and its impulse towards the imagination see: Silvia Vizzardelli, *Verso una nuova estetica. Categorie in movimento*, Bruno Mondadori, Milano-Torino 2010.

[10] This paragraph intends to offer examples of philosophers who have become interested in the role of music in politics in order to enrich the reflection with voices not only coming from the musical or political sphere, but also, given the great relevance, from the philosophical sphere. The paragraph has no claim to exhaustiveness.

> - "What are the plaintive harmonies? Tell me, because you're a musician.
> - This is the mixed Lydian and the acute, and a few other similar.
> - And what are the soft and used harmonies in treats?
> - The Ionian and the Lydian, which we call loose harmonies.
> - Can they be of any use for people of war?
> - Of no use; so, there may well be only Dorian and Phrygian harmonies left"[11].

Plato considers that music is an art allowing the elevation of the intellect of the citizen; this is how music fits into its ideal city[12]. For him, there are no detours: bad music must be banished from the just city, because of its moral consequences on the individual and its political consequences on the city. The theme of censorship and freedom of expression is fundamental to Plato: it is based on a conception of the truth or the falsity[13] of the arts which is superimposed on the discourse on their moral value and which has its source in the Platonic conception of the arts as imitations. Real music is that of the artist who achieves the balance between the contrary elements of his human nature: reason, passions and appetites. Music breathes joy and serenity which is the emotion of the human in harmony with the cosmic order. Music leads to action, which is good for the soul and can even heal the agitated soul. It promotes solidarity in the city by providing a framework and an aesthetic for common action, on the ceremonial, liturgical or military level.

If we make a time jump, we can observe that the music raises in a transversal way a large number of problems which agitate the anthropology of the Moderns: the reference to nature, the possibility of imitation, the transformation of passions. The philosophies of music in the classical age therefore initiate a reflection on representation, in its epistemological, social and political aspects. They illustrate concretely the transition from 17th-century rationalism to the empiricism of the Enlightenment.

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[11] Alain Badiou. *La République de Platon,* Fayard, New York 2016, p. 65.

[12] Claude Desplanques, *La musique et sa place dans la cité chez les philosophes grecs,* "Enseignement Philosophique: Revue de l'Association des Professeurs de Philosophie de l'Enseignement Public", 2007, pp. 17-38.

[13] Plato leads a rearguard fight against what he considers the source of evil: moral and political relativism peddled by the sophists and the rhetoricians who take refuge behind Heraclitus and draw from the laconic teachings of the master a form of irrationalism based on the fact that the cosmos would be lawless chaos, an unstable balance of opposites in perpetual struggle, in change so constant that we never bathe twice in the same river.

According to Jean Jacques Rousseau, music has a physical impact and through this physical influence could unify groups and excites violence, in short music reveals social and political processes[14]. The music's impact on society could be summarized by a quote from the ethnomusicologist John Blacking, who states: "Being organized sound, it expresses aspects of the experience of individuals in society"[15]. To that end individual make sense of music by mentally organizing the different musical information: rhythm, harmony, tone. Similarly, the individuals make sense of society by creating logic links between its different components, work, money, status, law.

Rousseau's writings on music were hardly accessible. We recall that the *A Complete Dictionary of Music* (1764) was born from the articles that Diderot commissioned, for the *Encyclopedia* (1751), from the one in whom Diderot saw, above all, a musician: Rousseau. The latter, it is true, counted on this facet of his talent to find a place in society. Overwhelmed, relieved of his honor and his fees, Rousseau set out to show that the Ramist system led to an art of non-communication. Now, "any song that says nothing is nothing". Music, according to him, is a language, it must be the art of living expression. Rousseau bases his linguistic and musical thinking on the need to reconcile the fulness of origins and knowledge. The dream of a regenerated art is looming: poetry speaks to the mind, music appeals to the ear, painting delights the eyes; the reunion of the three renews with the first festivals, at the time of the unity of speech and melody. The opera is a masterpiece of civilization, to which Rousseau entrusts the mission of bringing about this return to the origin, which is also the cancellation of time.

Eminent figure of the Risorgimento, Giuseppe Mazzini symbolizes the fight for the reunification of Italy, which he supported, from his London exile, by the tireless organization of uprisings against foreign "occupiers", and an activity of writer, journalist, pamphleteer. His *Philosophy of Music* (1836), the only text he devoted to music, is part of a program outlining the regeneration of Italian culture, an essential element for the creation of new mentalities and political structures. His work is presented as a project for the renewal of the opera. The opera that Rossini - a symbol of conquering individualism - has brought to its point of perfection is now obsolete. Mazzini believes that he perceives a new aesthetic in Donizetti. The absolute reign of

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[14] Jean-Marie Donegani, *Musique et politique: le langage musical entre express*Ivit*é et vérité*, "Raisons politiques", vol. 2, 2004, pp. 5-19.
[15] John Blacking, Eric Blondel, and Marika Blondel, *Le sens musical*, Les Éditions de Minuit, Paris 1980, p.12.

melody and the fragmentation of form are no longer satisfactory: it will take unity, a predominant color, historical plausibility, giving more space to the choirs, reworking the recitative. Mazzini went so far as to anticipate the Wagnerian leitmotif - which led to his ideas being commented on again at the end of the 19th century. This essential text is therefore not another pamphlet or satire: its incisive formulations are at the service of regeneration, the transition from a simple form of distraction to a "social opera" that would become part of the city.

Moreover, according to the philosopher Max Weber, music can anticipate new political and scientific paradigms. Indeed, despite the irrational behavior music induces, the latter is ruled by extremely rational laws which are contained in the concept of "music theory"[16]. Therefore, Weber conceived the development of music theory as a vast movement of rationalization which preceded and inspired science, politics and economics[17].

Music occupies a significant place in Gilles Deleuze's thought, from contemporary music to baroque, classical and romantic music, and more broadly to all sound signals. Solicited at an expressive, technical, historical, no less than anthropological and political level, Deleuze draws inspiration from contemporary musical practice to create his concepts - *ritournelle, rhizome, agencements, machines* - to name a few, now translated into many languages.

In many cases, philosophers reflected on the reality around them in which the close links between politics and music were manifest. We refer for example in the case of Mao Zedong's "cultural revolution", music was used to build the "communist utopia" by efficiently brainwashing the population[18]. Nazi Germany also used music as a propaganda tool by banning the works of Jewish composers (e.g. Schoenberg) and praising the contributions of German composers. Adolf Hitler was strongly influenced by Richard

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[16] Music theory is the corpus of rules that allows musicians to compose, write and teach music (see Brown & Dempster, *the scientific image of music theory, "*Journal of Music Theory", vol.1, 1989, pp. 65-106).

[17] Max Weber, Jean Molino, Emmanuel Pedler, *Sociologie de la Musique. Les Fondements Rationnels Et Sociaux de la Musique*, Métailié, Paris 1998.

[18] Arnold Perris*, Music as Propaganda: Art at the Command of Doctrine in the People's Republic of China, "*Ethnomusicology"*, vol 27, 1983, pp. 1-28.

Wagner, regarded as anti-Semitic to the point that the dictator set him up as an example of what "Aryan music" should be[19].

In this regard, it is necessary to add that The Case of Wagner was published by Nietzsche in 1888, five years after Wagner's death. Wagnerian music, which Nietzsche praised in his *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872) as the embodiment of a new total German art, has gone from iconoclastic to religious, from Dionysian to Nihilist.

In *Twilight of the Idols, or, How to Philosophize with a Hammer* (1889), the title of which is an ironic reference to Wagner's *Götterdämmerung* (1876), Nietzsche wanted to "break the idols" with a hammer. In his eyes, Wagner has just become an idol, a symptom of the nihilism of his time and the advent of a performing art at the expense of art as creation.

We also observe this phenomenon in the 20th century democracies with politicians using music according to an idolatrous use in order to influence the population and to induce social change[20]. Through this relationship popular music shaped the civil rights fight in the USA and influenced a generation through lyrics and the political posture the musicians.[21] The political scientist Jean-Marie Donegani confirms this idea, stating that music is also political because it has the power to make people believe or to make people do. Music does not question the springs of this power; music only seeks to be submitted to this power in order to use and regulate its effects[22].

The Music in the Utopian Thought

Music is frequently mentioned in utopias as a positive art form, except for the utopia of Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* (1872) in which music is characterized

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[19] Carolyn Ticker, *The Effect of Richard Wagner's Music and Beliefs on Hitler's Ideology,* "Musical Offerings"*,* 2016*,* p. 1.

[20] John Street, "*Fight the power": The politics of music and the music of politics,* "Government and Opposition", vol. 38, 2003, pp.113-130.

[21]Sean Kay, *Rockin'the Free World: How the Rock & Roll Revolution Changed America and the World,* Rowman & Littlefield*,* Lanham 2016, p. 112.

[22] Jean-Marie Donegani, *Musique et politique: le langage musical entre expressivité et vérité,* "Raisons politiques", 2004, pp. 5-19.

by its unpleasant, discordant sounds[23]. For some composer's music is the main element of the utopia ideal, for instance the composer Hector Berlioz imagined in 1844 a city, "Euphonia", where all inhabitants would devote all their time to music. Berlioz writes:

> All Euphonians, men, women, and children, concern themselves exclusively with singing, playing instruments, and everything directly connected with the art of music. The majority are at one and the same time instrumental players and singers[24].

Beethoven as well as other classical composers also presented premises of Utopian ideals through his ninth symphony which opens with "all men shall become brothers"[25].

Despite the omnipresence of music in these utopias, the political question is also considered as important. It can be observed in Ernest Bloch book, *Spirit of Utopia* (1918) in which the composer merged Marxism and music. According to him music would fulfill the utopian function by stimulating the imagination, and this imagination is productive for the "communist revolution"[26]. For Bloch music would indicate what is missing between reality and utopia, and clearly express the necessary step to achieve the utopia. Music would therefore fulfill a political ideal or sometimes be the origin of the utopian thinking. For instance, Adorno analyzed the music composed by Maher to build his reflexion on utopianism. To that end Yves Vaillancourt wrote:

> Adorno's analysis leads to the idea of a whole presence in the world and of euphoric unity with it. But this would only exist in adults and musicians as a reminiscence of a universe that had to be said goodbye[27].

Adorno considered music as the most utopic form of art as each musical note would open different possibilities. He considered that music cannot guarantee

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[23] Joël Marie Fauquet, *Musique en utopie. Les voies de l'euphonie sociale de Thomas More à Hector Berlioz,* PSU-Presses Sorbonne Université, Paris 2019.
[24] Béatrice Didier, *Hector Berlioz et l'art de la nouvelle,* "Romantisme"*,* 1876, pp. 19-26.
[25] Solomon Maynard, *Beethoven, sonata, and Utopia*, "Telos", 1971, pp. 32-47.
[26] Ruth Levitas *Educated hope: Ernst Bloch on abstract and concrete utopia*, "Utopian Studies", 1990, vol. 1, pp. 13-26.
[27] Yves Vaillancourt, *Musique, mystique et utopie*, "Possibles", vol. 1, 2018, p.1.

an ideal world but gives the tool to imagine it by its highly interpretative nature and its constant desire of freedom. However, Adorno and Bloch are not the only philosophers who studied the peculiar link between music and politics, philosopher such as Aliocha Lasowki also analyzed this relationship noting that both music and utopias can be only be understood through their emotional power[28]. Indeed, as observed by the philosopher Vladimir Jankélélvitch "The tears of music deliver us" [29], therefore by inducing emotions, music allows listeners to reach a new state where everything is possible. Furthermore, these emotions are usually universal, music would therefore create a new ideal world where everyone is connected. Lastly, for the philosopher Alvaro Oviedo, the act of composition is inherently utopic, the partition is a universe where each measure suggests an infinity of possibilities [30].

Surprisingly, before the rise of popular music in the 1950s, it seems that utopias and music have been only studied in relation to themselves, in other words, these works seldomly mention how these utopias are received by the population. Additionally, music is described as a utopian act but the rules and the meaning of these utopias are not clearly described. Before the 50s, music would therefore only be an attempt to reach the utopia but never the "utopia".

The relation between music, politics, utopia and the general population is recent and dated from the mid-2000s[31]. The reason behind this absence of literature on utopia and music in the context of popular music would be according to the sociologist Ruth Levitas, because it poses a problem of analysis, writing in 2013:

> Because of the "evanescent quality" of music, its "abstraction", something is always missing, lost in translation […], but the capacity to transport the listener or performer into a better world is precisely what "renders music utopian, for it is this better world and the attempt and

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[28]Aliocha Wald Lasowski, *Les Larmes musicales,* "La Nouvelle revue française", vol. 1, 2009, pp. 197-204.

[29] Yves Vaillancourt, *Musique, mystique et utopie*, "Possibles", vol. 1, 2018, p.1.

[30] Grégoire Tosser, *Hommages en fragments : le chemin entre György Kurtág et Luigi Nono*, Drammaturgia Musicale e altri studi, Alfieri e Ranieri publishing, Paris 2004.

[31] Françoise Dupeyron-Lafay, *The Music and (dis) harmony of (anti) utopia in Samuel Butler's Erewhon,* "Cahiers victoriens et édouardiens", vol. 89, 2019.

experience of its prefiguration that is the defining character of utopianism"[32].

Here we observed how music and utopianism were closely linked despite an apparent lack of literature of the issue.

Utopia and Dystopia in Popular Music
With the rise of popular music, the utopian thought will emerge to a wide audience public, even in the most unexpected music genre such as the electronic dance music. Through group such as the Pet shop boys electronic dance music delivers a singular vision of what is utopia.

> Many recent dance hits (2009/2011) imagine utopian environments of blissful release by narrating the interaction among dancers, the DJ, and the dance floor. […] Pet Shop Boys engage communities of fans and critics in utopianism, the act of social dreaming, in a more intentional and cerebral way than other recent mainstream dance pop hits [33].

Traces of utopias in popular music can be found in the 60s with the rise of psychedelic rock and hippies communities with bands such as "Jefferson Airplane" or "The Pink Floyd." Psychedelic Rock music promoted the idea of a peaceful and free society, an event such as Woodstock (the 1969 music festival) was perceived as an attempt to transform this utopia in a reality. [34] The impact of the utopian thinking of the 60s and 70s rock music on the population was massive mainly because of the popularity of the music. Even in 2020 there are hippies' communities. Moreover the "peace and love" symbol directly derived from the hippie subculture is still one of the most popular among the youth.

However, the rock music of the 60s and 70s evoked utopia in a very elusive way and rarely in the context of the music. At the end, the song "Imagine" from John Lennon presented a utopic world where "all the people living life in peace" but with no real reflexion on how to put this ideal in

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[32] Ruth Levitas, *Looking for the blue: The necessity of utopia,* Journal of Political Ideologies, vol.12, 2007, pp. 289-306.
[33] Carter Hanson. *Pop Goes Utopia: An Examination of Utopianism in Recent Electronic Dance Pop*, "Utopian Studies", vol. 25, 2014, pp. 384-413.
[34] Clara Lemaire, *Woodstock: Ecrire l'histoire d'un mythe*, La Sorbonne, Paris 2013.

place. This absence of constructed utopia allows the musicians to introduce the utopian thought and then let the listeners do their own reflexion on it as Kitner and Watkins (2003) underline it.

> Sleater-Kinney, and Neko Case began conversations, and if their utopian songs represent imperatives to imagine different, better futures, then the fallow lands exist in the minds of listeners. Far from being pejorative, "that fallow feeling", should compel listeners of all kinds to reexamine not only how popular music provokes our thoughts and actions, but why and towards what end[35].

As Kintner and Watkins write, 60s and 70s rock music considered the experience of utopia as "heteropian" for the listeners: "The songs create liminal space for as long as they last; they are good-places and not-places simultaneously"[36].

At the end of the 70s and beginning of the 80s, the conception of utopia will drastically change. Indeed, for post-punk groups such as "Gang of Four" or "Devo", it is no longer possible to imagine an ideal society. Therefore, in order to progress it is necessary to "kill" the hippie dream and present a hypercriticism of the actual society. According to these groups, we are actually living in a dystopia. This specific stance towards utopia is embodied by a quote from Siebers (1954) who writes that *"Utopianism demonstrates both a relentless dissatisfaction with the here and now as well as a bewilderment about the possibility of thinking beyond the here and now"*[37].

The journalist Simon Reynolds also observes this tendency in 80s music and notes that punk and post punk remains "utopic" by inversion, both genres signal the possibility of freedom by underlining its absence in the present.

This transition from utopia to dystopia is significant in the late 80s and early 90s through the popularization of metal music. Metal bands such as "Voivod" or "Fear Factory" presented dystopian universes inspired by science fictions, in their music they are putting the finger on the danger of artificial intelligence, the loss of free will or the anticipation of a eugenic

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[35] Amy Kintner and Holly Watkins, *She's so busy being free: the dynamics of utopia in popular music by women, 1968-2008*, University of Rochester, Rochester 2013.
[36] Ibidem.
[37] Tobin Siebers, *What Does Postmodernism Want? Utopia, Postmodern Utopia and the Body Politic,* University of Michigan Press, Ann Arbor 1996, vol. 1, pp. 1-39.

society. Metal musicians often engage in the imagination of the worst possible outcome both through lyricism and aesthetics. In contrast to post-punk musicians, our actual society is not the worst possible for metal musicians, and they rely on the imagination to propose what is often a detailed dystopia.[38]

Here we observed how popular music shift from deconstructed utopian thought to, in order to express political engagement in a more accurate manner, elaborate dystopian universes. Through one concrete example, we will in the next section observe how utopian thought in music confronted political thought.

The message behind dystopia: the example of the album 2112 by Rush
In April 1976, the Canadian progressive rock band "Rush" released *2112*. This album was a commercial breakthrough and remains one of the most successful albums in Canadian History (3 million CDs sold)[39]. *2112* is a concept album set in the fictitious city of Megadon, a city dominated by High Priests. In this world individualism and creativity are illegal and music is unknown. However, in the year 2112 an anonymous hero will find a guitar, use it to protest against the priests and bring freedom to Megadon. On a more political note *2112* is a science fiction ode to individualism which takes its inspiration from the philosophy of Ayn Rand, an American objectivist philosopher. 2112 would be a musical version of her book *Anthem* which is also the name of the Canadian label of Rush[40]. The drummer and main lyricist of the band, Neil Peart described himself as a fanatic of objectivism. A conception which is sometimes presented as a libertarian ideal by putting the emphasis on individual freedom and rejects the idea of altruism and socialism[41], as underlined Ayn Rand's words in Anthem (1937): "To be free, a man must be free of his brothers. That is freedom. That and nothing else"[42].

Therefore in *2112* both altruism and socialism are fought by the hero. Similarly, the band consider that socialism is the main problem of countries

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[38] Laura Taylor, *Metal music as critical dystopia: humans, technology and the future in 1990s science fiction metal,* PhD diss., Brock University, Saint Catharines 2006.
[39] Brett Barnett, *Rush's Lyrical Rhetoric of Oppression and Liberation: Extending "Freedom Songs" into the Progressive Rock Genre*, "Relevant Rhetoric", vol. 7, 2016.
[40] Martin Bill & Al, *Rand, Rock, and Radicalism Chris Matthew Sciabarra*, "The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies", 2003, vol. 5, pp. 229-41.
[41] Larry Secherest, *Rand, anarchy, and taxes, "*The Journal of Ayn Rand Studies", vol.1, 1999, pp. 163-187.
[42] Ayn Rand, *Anthem,* Penguin, New York 2005, p. 205.

such as Britain and regard "punk rock" as a reaction to society that erases the individual. Furthermore, they often display in interviews a disdain for the idea of altruism by again referencing to Ayn Rand and her book "*The Virtue of Selfishness: A New Concept of Egoism*"[43].

In the book *Rush and philosophy*[44], Steven Horowitz observed that *2112* contains several themes central to the libertarian philosophy. Particularly the capacity of the "free individual" to disrupt the collective through his will, perseverance and creativity.

The album *2112* can also represent a reaction to the "collective" apathy of the music industry. Rather than conforming to the musical standards of the 70s by writing a short hard rock song (4 minutes maximum), they open the album with a very complex and conceptual 30 minutes song in an attempt to liberate the music industry of the "collective passivity" exactly like the hero in *2112*. The latter also challenges the political doxa of their time by advocating for more individualism and less altruism while most of the psychedelic/progressive rock bands of the time defended the collective over the individual.

By presenting an elaborate dystopic universe through their music, Rush had a massive impact on the political thought and the population by spreading the objectivist ideal of Ayn Rand. They anticipated the punk and post punk movement of 1977 and the neoliberal politics of the early 80s (Reagan and Thatcher). Rush theorized in a very fashioned way the idea of the individualistic power and instead of putting it into paper with grips to analyze, *2112* made it romantic and cleared minded.

There is no place for interpretation in *2112* and by adding a dystopic element to their music they defend their political belief both in a persuasive and convincing way. In that way *2112* is one of the first "concrete" demonstrations of utopian thought in popular music in contrast with "elusive" mention of utopia in the music of the 60s. Now that we fully grasp how utopian thought and music interact, we will observe how utopian thought might influence the political thoughts of the listeners.

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[43] Jim Berti, Durrell Bowman, *Rush and philosophy: Heart and mind united*, Open Court, Chicago 2011, p. 57.
[44] Ivi, p. 68.

Influence of Utopia on the Political Belief

Even at the individual level studies confirmed the influence of music on political thought, not only through the lyrics, but also through the symbolic power behind each music genre. This symbolic power is related to the political norms constructed around music usually by the fans. Through both the content of music and the exposure to this political norm's, music can change shape or change our political opinion[45].

In certain musical genres derived from popular music (metal, hip-hop, punk rock), music goes beyond the simple framework of sound and becomes a component of a particular way of life, this is a musical subculture. These subcultures have for origins a music genre to which political and cultural ideals are gradually added. The hippie subculture, for example, was characterized by the appreciation for long, sometimes improvised pieces of music to which were grafted very progressive ideals.

In subcultures, the exchange between music and political ideology is bilateral. By getting involved in a musical subculture, listeners are exposed to political norms but also inject their own political ideas into the subculture. Musical subcultures are very popular among young people (14 to 28 years of age), a population whose political views change a lot and could be shaped by the utopian thought[46]. These same subcultures are also the one where Utopians/dystopian universe are the more pregnant.

But how could an overly complex and constructed political form of expression such as utopian thought, have an impact?

It is possible that it would impair the development of political thought by substituting any interpretative value to it and therefore destroy all possibility of personal thinking. On the other hand, the overly detailed and accurate depiction of the ideal or non-ideal reality could lead people to do more research and therefore build a solid political reflexion.

Furthermore, musicians can easily twist and put the emphases on certain ideas through musical arrangement, and therefore what could be perceived as positive (such as socialist society) may turn into a dystopian perspective if the music is dark or dissonant.

If music has an impact on the political belief, is this also the case for utopias? According to Alessandro Ferrara, the utopian thought has influenced

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[45] Karen Beth, Thomas Volgy, *Socio-political attitudes and musical preferences, "*Social Science Quarterly"*, 1975, pp. 450-459.

[46]Otto Nomous, *Race, Anarchy, and Punk Rock, "*Turning the Tide"*, 2001, vol. 14, p. 10.

politics since Plato's republic. It was often the foundation of dictatorship or of any kind of radical system. In that regard, Ferrara wrote in the article, *The interaction of political and utopian thought* (2010): "While non-utopian thought may quibble with footnotes, utopia's secret weapon for success is its radicalism"[47].

Because of their radicalism, most of utopias are programed to fail, however, theses failure gave birth to modern form of government. It was for instance the case of Owenism which paved the way for the creation of cooperatives and unions in Britain.

Dystopias also have an impact at the individual level, for example in 2013, when Americans learned the vast scope of government surveillance, the book *1984* raced up the bestseller list. To illustrate this new obsession for dystopia the Washington Post underlined that in 1985 they found only five mentions of the word dystopia in the press while that number increased to 25,078 in 2019[48].

This recent popularity of dystopia is explained by Matthew Benjamin Cole's dissertation *Fear the Future: Dystopia and Political Imagination in the Twentieth Century*[49], where he presents dystopia as a powerful tool to induce new political ideas. He writes:

> Dystopia is as the site of emergence for a new paradigm of social thought […]. Amid the diverse products of the dystopian imagination lies the fear that in the future the characteristically human capacities to think and act will be tightly constrained[50].

According to him, dystopia is an act of political imagination which presents two dangers: the proclivity to be prey to imagination, and the intertwined proclivity to fail to exercise imagination[51]. This is the exact point through which utopia in music could be dangerous, when the utopian thought is well-

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[47]Alexandre Ferrara, *Interaction-political-utopian-thought,* "Maize", 2010.

[48] Calver Jones, Celia Paris, *Dystopian fiction makes people more willing to justify political violence. Should you worry*, Washington Post, 2019.

[49] Matthew Benjamin Cole, *Dystopia and Political Imagination in the Twentieth Century*, Duke University, Durham 2017.

[50] Ibidem.

[51] For two recent and instructive discussions of the concept of political imagination and its roots in contemporary social theory, see: Mihaela Czobor-Lupp, *Imagination in Politics: Freedom or Domination?*, Lexington, Lanham 2014; Chiara Bottici, *Imaginal Politics: Images Beyond Imagination and the Imaginary*, Columbia University Press, New York 2014.

defined listeners risk being the prey of the imagination of someone else and therefore fail to exercise their own imagination.

Empirical research also demonstrated that dystopias have a power at the individual level. Being exposed to dystopian narratives increases people's openness to radical form of political action. In an experiment made by the professor Calvert W. Jones[52], people were exposed to dystopian fiction. He observed that this exposure increases the willingness to justify violence for political action.

We observe that both music and utopia and more particularly dystopia, would therefore have an impact on the political belief of the listeners at the group level and at the individual level. In this last part we will conclude through which way utopian thought in music can be excessively powerful.

Utopia and Subcultures

Hippie communities and punk subculture are two concrete examples of how utopian imagination in music influenced political thought. These two subcultures are often opposed, first musically, indeed psychedelic music proposes long elaborated jams, while punk focus on short, emotional and violent song. In the lyrics we also find a strong difference as hippies defend a pacifist and positive utopia while punk is more realistic, pessimistic and overly dystopian[53]. These differences in how the utopian thought is delivered influenced the political identity of these communities.

In the case of hippies, the political ecosystem is the direct impact of the "elusive" utopian thought displayed in the music. By proposing a highly interpretative universe where love, peace, altruism and nonviolence rules, musicians induce a strong yet not assertive political reflexion in the direction of the listener. This political reflexion materialized in the different hippies' communities that existed during the 60s (some of them still exist such as "Freetown Christina" in Copenhagen). However due to the extremely interpretative power of utopian thought in music, the political system through which hippies evolved changed depending on the location and decade of the different groups. In the case of these communities, there are no "fixed rules" or system to respect. In the exact same way as, psychedelic music did not

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[52] Jones Calvert, Celia Paris, *It's the end of the world and they know it: How dystopian fiction shapes political attitudes,* "Perspectives on Politics", 2018, vol. 16, pp. 969-989.
[53] Ana Raposo, *Never Trust a Hippie: The Representation of 'Extreme' Politics, Punk Music Graphics and the Influences of Protest and Propaganda Traditions,* vol. 1, 2011, pp.1-12.

follow any form of musical rules[54]. The absence of a clear political belief within the hippie communities is a result of the "elusive" utopian thought displayed in the music.

Meanwhile punk communities are influenced by the dystopian storytelling used in punk music. These dystopian universes are usually "concrete," direct and elaborated, the lyrics are stemmed with youthful cynicism towards societal values and disgust with the hippie movement. The set of rules proposed in the dystopian universe of punk is less subject to interpretation. In results that punk communities are more homogenous than hippies' community and possessed a fixed set of rules; that are still evolving depending of the period and location[55]. Among the many we can mention the refusal of any form of hierarchy, the creation of its own model of distribution (DIY), the pure equality of everyone, the absence of authority. Moreover, punk prefers direct action rather than the contemplation[56]. These "communities" are built on a very solid and concrete "those" that are the result of the pragmatic and assertive dystopian universe displayed in the music.

Conclusion

Through this essay we noted how utopianism is inherently linked to politics. Furthermore, utopias influenced the political beliefs of their time by suggesting an ideal model. This intricate relation between utopia and politics can be found in all forms of expression, literature, architecture and music. The latter has the capacity to express utopia even without using any word. The music would have the power to induce utopianism only through sound such as the instrumental song "Toad" by the band Cream.

Utopias and music have a political character, it is safe to assume that they may influence political attitude when combined. This influence on political beliefs will be particularly strong from 50s until now with the democratization of music, which exposes listeners to different forms of utopia. We argue that regardless of the content of the utopia (all forms of

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[54] Charles Mingle, Samuel Roll, *Bugs in the flowers: A review of the nonviolent ethic of the hippie subculture*, "Adolescence", vol. 9, 1974, pp. 311–316.

[55] Andy Bennett, *Punk's not dead: The continuing significance of punk rock for an older generation of fans, "*Sociology", 2006, pp. 219-235.

[56] Paula Guerra, Pedro Quintela, *Punk, fanzines and DIY cultures in a global world. Fast, Furious and Xerox*, Springer Nature Switzerland AG, Basel 2020.

utopias and dystopia are explored in music), its expression could influence political beliefs at the individual level.

To that end, we distinguish two forms of utopianism in music, the elusive form and the concrete form. The elusive is notably present in pop/psychedelic/folk/electronic music, it refers to an expression of utopia which is highly interpretative and often positive. In the elusive form, the lyrics are not making reference to a well-designed utopia with its set of rules. Musicians are throwing in general ideas and leave the interpretation to the listeners. This elusive form usually relies more on the instrumentation rather than the lyrics. The impact of the elusive expression of utopia can be observed among hippies and rave communities.

The concrete form of expression is notably present in metal/punk/post-punk/. In this form the utopia is not interpretative and mostly negative (dystopia), the musicians usually present pragmatically the key element of the utopia/dystopia (rules, setting, inspiration). Contrary to the elusive form, it is through the lyrics and the stance of the musician that the utopia is expressed rather than the music. The impact of the elusive expression of utopia can be observed among the punk and metal community. In the elusive form, listeners have no real frame to think about the utopias presented and must build their own utopia with the few hints gave by the musicians. The political belief related to the utopia will therefore mostly depend of the interpretation of the listeners.

In the concrete form, the listeners have already a body of work presented, they cannot therefore build his own political beliefs through this form. However, they can either agree or disagree with the vision presented. This process can lead the listeners to develop strong opinion depending on the topic tackled by the musician. In both cases we observe that utopianism in music influences the political belief of the listeners.