The Dialectical Eroticism of Improvisation

Tord Gustavsen, May 2008

INTRODUCTION

An Australian journalist wrote in a preview of our concert in Melbourne: "Music is all about sex. It's about tension and release, eagerness and restraint, gratification and generosity, control and surrender, and other delicately opposed forces in a more or less graceful fumble towards ecstasy." [1]

Let us start here. Although tabloid, this sentence summarizes a lot of what the dialectical eroticism of improvisation is about. I believe there are crucial parallels between the realm of music-making and the many realms of intimacy. Challenges facing us in one field can help us understand parallel challenges in other fields. The metaphorical – sometimes almost poetical – quality of understanding one thing in the light of another can be of great importance. We can gain *inspiration* and *self-development* both as persons and as musicians.

My main argument is that a specific listing of *five basic dialectical dilemmas* or *themes* can be highly relevant to understanding the challenges of musical improvisation. This listing of dilemmas is collected from a psychological theory of development that in itself bridges the infant's early forming of a self with adult challenges in close personal relationships at later stages in life. Thus, we have three levels constantly present in my dealings with these dilemmas:

1) The infant forming a self through interaction with the primary caretakers

2) The adult engaging in intimate relationships – both as eroticism and as lasting companionship, and

3) The improviser relating to, making sense of, acting on, and being formed by his or her musical surroundings, that is, the sounding music, by the physical instrument, and by the fellow musicians (if any).

Now, instead of beginning (as I did in my more lengthy thesis) with summarizing and discussing existing theoretical approaches thus laying out extended background and terminology for our project – let me move directly to the 'five polarities' or dilemmas. First I must rush into acknowledging, then, my sources for the listing of the dilemmas. Primarily we have Norwegian psychologist *Anne-Lise Løvlie Schibbye*, who is in turn building on theory from German psychoanalyst *Helm Stierlin* as well as a vast body of existentialist psychology. I am deeply grateful to Løvlie Schibbye for writing the beautiful little book called "The Self – Yours, Mine, or Ours?" (Løvlie 1982), which was where I was first exposed to this line of thinking. For empirical data I use interview quotes collected from *Paul Berliner*'s book "Thinking In Jazz" heavily (Berliner 1994). This is coupled with basic insights from the so-called 'scenic music theory' as delivered to me through *Rolf Inge Godøy* and his renderings of *Pierre Schaffer*'s writings. The key concepts here are those of 'musical objects' and their 'emergent qualitites'.

The 'five polarities' are descriptions of dilemmas that mankind is 'doomed to' live with and encounter on a multitude of levels – dilemmas that must always be worked through in changing relations and changing situations throughout our life span. They are as follows:

- Moment vs. duration

- Difference vs. sameness

- Gratification vs. frustration

- Stability vs. stimulation

- Closeness vs. distance

Fundamentally, each polarity or dilemma comes with a set of dynamic potential, and a set of dangers. Dangers threaten when dialectics are 'frozen' – that is when there is no creative movement, when the *flow* of relations (or the flow of music) is stalled in repetitive conflict. Dialectic potential, on the other hand, lies in dynamic resolution of conflict, and in fruitful integration of opposing forces. And – importantly – we are *not* aiming here for the dullness of a 'middle way' – a middle way without any clear profile and striking qualities. You need to really *embrace* and *explore* each side of every paradox, but in ways that don't bring about the frozenness and the repetitive conflicts.

Now – let's introduce the five dilemmas with a few remarks that bind them together. The art of improvisation is a field where you develop storytelling, narratives, form, harmony, etc. pretty much in the way a composer does. These are parameters of music frequently dealt with in existing literature. But this art form is just as much a *live act* where the musician *confronts* and *faces* the music, her fellow musicians, and the audience – in a very *real time* situation. A virtuoso improviser not only has to possess impressing analytical, creative and technical abilities, but equally important the ability to *put these forces into play* in the midst of multi-faced, often chaotic situations. The improviser has to build a musical unfolding that *works* on all levels from individual phrases up to the concert experience as a whole – without having much time to focus on each level separately. The improviser must attach musical activity to a basic 'groove' and 'mood', while at the same time *challenge* and transcend these relatively stable qualities. The improviser must bring out his or her intensity and emotional presence without losing technical control, and without losing the ability to create overviews and orient herself in the musical landscape. All this, in my opinion, ties the art of improvisation closely to the basic challenges we have when developing as human beings. And, I believe that psychological and philosophical theory dealing with precisely these kinds of dialectical challenges in close personal relations, in sexuality and in child development, may shed a very fruitful light on the analogous challenges in making improvised music.

First, we have…

I. MOMENT VS. DURATION

The ability to negotiate musical *time* at different levels of resolutions is crucial for an improviser – all the way from the production of a single note via a gesture or phrase, a chorus or a bar structure, up to an entire piece. And even the concert as a whole – there are shapes unfolding in time on all these levels. And a good improviser must make her stuff *work* on every level.

The first dialectical theme explores the intense dilemma between the *here and now* and the *unfolding in time*. Creative potential in this field can be summarized as the fruitful tension between *involvement* and *intensity* in the moment on the one hand, and the *fullness* and the *reliability* in that which lasts and builds itself over time, on the other.

The dangers threatening on the dark side of this polarity, however, lie in the 'blind', restless and isolated moment vs. the empty and boring duration – a duration without intensity, without a focus and presence that can sweep you away and absorb you.

As with all five polarities: the potential awaiting in the attractive versions of the dilemma has a tendency to transform into its destructive 'shadows' if we are not able to initiate a dialectical movement. One side has to be brought into dialogue with the other – and new consciousness thus created in a process of synthesis.

MOMENT VS. DURATION			
Frozen dialectics		**Dynamic Potential**	
'blind', restless, isolated moments	empty, boring duration without intensity and focus	involvement & intensity in the moment	fullness & reliability in that which lasts and builds itself over time

The infant must go through a process from an undifferentiated state of being – where everything is experienced immediately in an all-embracing now – towards a familiarity with the passing of time by the experience of rhythms and cycles, and towards a coming to terms with deferred gratification. All of this has a huge potential for creating fear and anxiety. For an intimate relationship to grow and last, you have to find ways to unite childlike involvement in the moment with reliability and a sense of rhythm and an appreciation of commitment. When it works, moments gain reliability from duration, and duration gains intensity from moments. When it doesn't work – you get bored or empty in duration, and the moments become 'blind' in their search for fulfillment without perspective.

By analogy, the improviser must also learn to unite his or her intense focus on the moment with a *backward orientation* and a *forward orientation*. Backwards in a feeling for the implications of musical events that have already taken place. Forwards as a deep feeling for the unique 'loading' of any musical situations, a penetrating understanding of musical qualities that can be developed further in the course of the improvisation. He or she must learn to 'hold back', to distribute intensity, and thus shape musical substance over time. This is difficult, because the fuel of spontaneity and childlike involvement must be maintained at the same time.

NEGOTIATING MUSICAL FORM

Orienting oneself in forms and chord changes underlying the improvisation also has to meet such a multi-directional imperative. You have to negotiate all the different levels at the same time, and at any given 'now' relate yourself to the given location in the basic unfolding of form. Advanced improvisers often possess huge and impressing flexibility in this respect. Improvisers must develop an ability to experience and to 'think' their musical now in different contexts – with a manifold, yet intensely focused fullness in perspective. Any given musical incident gains its meaning partly from its *relatedness* to the overall form, its relatedness to the musical processes activated in dynamics, timbre, rhythm, and – in linear improvisation, at least – to the gestural aspects of what has been going on in the music so far. You have to be completely *there*, in the heat of the moment. At the same time, you have to be in control of the unfolding, to be intuitively aware of the time line and the internal relations in the musical texture. And for great improvisation to really happen, this can not be an academic analysis, nor a troublesome *shifting* of focus back and forth; it must be a lived synthesis of man's basic dilemma between the moment and the duration.

STRATEGIES AND CROSS-MODALITY

The ability to unite moment and duration is fundamental for improvised *strategy making*. Short term, intermediate term and long term goals must flow in an organic decision making process. For this to happen, the improviser must orient herself through flexible and efficient cognitive representations of musical substance. The ability to create snapshot overviews is crucial. Overviews can facilitate spontaneous analysis of the musical processes going on, and spontaneous analysis of options for further development embedded in any given situation. Music can always be understood and encoded in an infinite number of ways, ranging from purely theoretical encoding based on for example harmony and rhythmic patterns, via visualizations of texture, timbre qualities etc., into more informal large-scale chunking of content – for example: 'Yes, there

we go again. We're doing the soft touch approach to swinging eigths coupled with use of extreme registers in the piano and mallets on drums.' These kinds of informal labeling of musical situations are constantly developed both in individual musicians and among ensembles playing together over time. The complexity of different ways of understanding the music present in musicians' consciousness is enormous. And this complexity can of course potentially cause the improvisation to stall because of sheer overflow – or because of inefficiency in processing and chunking.

Crucial to achieving required efficiency in this field, then, is employing *cross-modal representations*. The tension between moment and duration is handled by the use of both

- muscular-motor memory,

- visual images of contour and texture, and

- more conventional theoretical categorization based on harmony and other parameters.

The different kinds of representation are all important in making up the totality of musical orientation. An improviser must possess a highly developed sense of *integration* in these landscapes, as well as a special kind of intense *concentration*, in order to hold these elements together and use them creatively in composing-in-the-moment. When such abilities are present, it is precisely the richness of this pluralistic universe of images – as well as the devotion in creative concentration amidst the richness – that assists the musician in producing musical meaning.

"As artists explore different approaches to improvisation – whether vocally or instrumentally, or conceptually improvising away from an instrument without vocalizing their creations – their ideas can assume different forms of representation. Improvisers sometimes emphasize aural thinking. At other times, they emphasize theoretical thinking. Additionally, their rich field of imagination can feature abstract visual displays. Curtis Fuller 'tries to paint little pictures' when he improvises. Fred Hersch, too, 'sees things very graphically that way.' He visualizes what he plays as 'a kind of big playground with things jumping around on it, usually in terms of melodic movement: things going up this way, balanced by something going down that way'. Or he will se 'large masses of things moving along: one string of notes jumping up and down, stopping, twitching around. Music has a feeling of space around it; it exists in space, these little mobiles of things. I like to think of music visually like that', Hersch explains" (Berliner 1994:175).

DIRECTION

Handling the moment in relation to the flow of time also demands a special sense of musical *direction*. By necessity, any point in the musical unfolding is part of movement in time, but it is the improviser's task to make these directional movements 'good', 'interesting', and 'organic'.

Harmony, of course, matters a lot in this respect, and a basic challenge for beginners in jazz improvisation is for example the need to 'anticipate the chord changes'. An esthetically satisfying jazz improvisation within styles based on chord changes, demands that you always combine an exploration of the various chords as universes in themselves with movements that foreshadow and prepare the chord to come. Bass player Rufus Reid states: "When I'm playing walking bass lines, I try to have the line moving somewhere. ... This has a lot to do with harmonic phrasing. If I'm playing a ii–V–I progression, I'm not just playing the notes of the chord. I'm moving toward V when I'm playing ii. I'm constantly flowing, pushing toward I. If you think consciously of moving somewhere harmonically when you play, it assimilates this swinging sound, because harmonic sound is motion" (Rufus Reid cited in (Berliner 1994:352)). More generally, David Sudnow says that "[t]o go for a sound is to go for a sound within a course. … It is in terms of securely targeted movements, implicated by preceding-forthcoming-positional-configurations, that the definition of sound is to be sought in the first place" (Sudnow 1993:74).

Here, Sudnow touches upon something very crucial in the 'moment vs. duration' dialectics of improvisation. The improviser's *intentional movement* – both mentally and physically – when he or she executes a 'go for a sound', is the main component of improvisation as an activity. The way a sound *works* and acquires meaning in different musical and motor relations, must be a part of the improviser's internalized and embodied *knowledge*. This knowledge is fundamental to the ability to form anticipating 'hypothesis' concerning potential sound events. It is also an important component in the ability to efficiently interpret events that have actually taken place – which in turn initiates further strategy making by processes of association, repetition, variation etc..

These insights can also be coupled with Alfred Pike's concepts of 'intuitive cognition' and 'prevision' from his essay "A Phenomenology of Jazz" (Pike 1974). These notions capture the improviser's ability to immediately discover and 'dig in to' fundamental qualities and possibilities for further development in a given musical event. Pike states: "What is first given must be developed. The incipient jazz image has its future horizons, and the improviser successively changes his viewpoint as he strives for these horizons. The immediate perceptual field contains within itself the potential structure of future fields" (Pike 1974:89). Accordingly, in musical improvisation the present is always in labor with the future – labor both in the sense of 'work' and as 'giving birth'.

PERCEPTION "IN A NOW" – DURATION CONCEPTUALIZED IN THE MOMENT

Now, let's turn to the crucial term of 'musical object'. The paradox-ridden relationship between a constant flux of sensations and relatively stable perceptions in the form of objects in consciousness is of great interest to modern music theory and psychology. You have to 'step out of time', so to speak, to form objects in consciousness in the constant stream of sensations. An object in consciousness is a crystallized discontinuity in the continuous soundscape, and such crystallization is necessary in order to orient ourselves and make sense of what's going on. "The continuous is only perceivable through the discontinuous, as 'the intuition of a temporal interval takes place in a now'" (Godøy 1997a:63 – with a quotation form Edmund Husserl). A 'subjective now' in Husserl's terms contains both protentions and retentions – that is, both foreshadows of time to come and impressions from preceding portions of time. The improviser's chain of moments is a sophisticated chain of 'subjective nows' along these lines. A musical object can be formed in consciousness on all levels of resolution of time – from a single note via a gesture or a phrase up to a concert as a whole.

'EMERGENT QUALITIES' AS PRAGMATIC SYNTHESIS

Here, we need to go into the basic notion of a musical object's 'emergent qualities'. Basically, emergent quality is anything striking about an object – a contour, a texture, a rhythmic pattern, etc.. From my experience, focusing on emergent qualities has significant potential for real-time practical *solutions* to some of the problems facing the improviser in the dilemma between moment and duration.

A moment's experience; an appealing sound quality, a perceived contour, a subtle harmonic resolution, a tickling tension, etc., etc. – all is based on a 'distributed substrate' sensed over time, but captured 'in a now'. To contemplate this fundamental paradox in our perception of sound, can be very useful to the improviser.

The wish to be existentially *present* in the details of the music can harm the ability to orient oneself in the broader soundscape. The urge to enter into deepness can harm the ability to get a grip of what one is actually delivering; that which can be perceived by listeners. I think that these dangers can be met by developing a habit of listening for the emergent qualities in phrases or musical events while they are still in the making in the improvisational process. Thereby, one strengthens the skill to perceive and control the relevant *connections* between details on a micro level and perceivable qualities on other levels of resolutions. While one is performing an improvised phrase, distinct emergent qualities usually manifests

themselves – often to the surprise of the improviser, too – qualities that can be purified, developed, deepened or contrasted efficiently if taken seriously and understood in the right way. If consciousness during performance is actively searching for these qualities as *qualities to encounter*, and not only focusing on technique, theory and devices, nor exclusively on the inner creative 'pressure' escaping objectivity, the improviser can come closer to a *listener's reality* without having to turn to populist, and often times alienating, ways of 'communicating with the audience'.

This is really about getting the *dialogue* happening in playing; not only with the other musicians (if any) and the audience (if any), but with oneself as a creative subject and an appreciating receiver. Hereby, the improviser strengthens her ability to build musical substance that *works*, in the sense that it offers striking and intriguing emergent qualities. This dialogic imperative demands the ability to negotiate relationships between unfolding in time (production of a distributed sound substrate) and existential *moments* (crystallized musical objects with emergent qualities perceived 'in a now'); at a multitude of levels, the improviser must converse different 'presences' and intimately *feel* connections between separate details building the larger units and the overall qualities of these units. Although the dialectics between moment and duration will always represent a field of challenge and risk even for advanced improvisers, an important path to practical solutions and development of improvisations skills in this area lies precisely in the common human mechanisms of sound perception – in the pendulum that is always moving between 'floating' substance and stable objects. Contemplating these mechanisms, and developing them to a maximum, is likely to do the improviser a lot of good.

To put it into a slogan: *Play for yourself as a listener* – by focusing creatively on emergent qualities of objects on a multitude of levels – get the dialogue going between inner urge and objective sound.

II. DIFFERENCE VS. SAMENESS

Here, we also start by laying out the difference between a constructive and a stalling version of the polarity. Creative potential in this field lies in the fruitful tension between individuality and clarity on the one hand and of belonging in immediate at-homeness and familiarity on the other. On the 'dark side' of this polarity lies the alienating *isolation* and lack of integration or understanding on the one hand, and the undifferentiated symbiosis on the other. In this symbiosis one lives in repetitive patterns without really recognizing otherness, without any tools of breaking out of patterns, without any clarity of vision to separate between breathing, evolving patterns and lifelessly repeating ones.

DIFFERENCE VS. SAMENESS			
Frozen dialectics		**Dynamic Potential**	
alienating isolation, lack of understanding	undifferentiated symbiosis, repetitive patterns whether they actually breathe or not	clarity of objects, individuality of ideas	belonging, 'at home'-ness, familiarity and understanding

As in the dilemma discussed in the previous section, the danger of transformation from growth-through-synthesis into stalling, unfruitful conflict faces us when we are unable to encounter the one side of the polarity with the other in a dialectical movement. Humans have an acute need of *both sides* in the polarity in their closest relations and also in their creative work. But the two sides can easily get into a difficult opposition, and the dialectical movement is easily 'frozen' in repetitive conflict.

Coming to terms with being separate *and* being connected; indeed, developing dialectical ways of being fulfilled in individuality through tight connections, and being relaxed in connected *belonging* through the

acquisition of secure separateness; these are all basic challenges for the infant's forming of a self. And they are basic challenges for the adult living the existential themes of the human condition again and again. Emmy van Deurzen also explores these paradoxes in her account of existentialist psychotherapy: "The balancing act that we all have to work with is that of going out towards the world whilst maintaining a centeredness and equilibrium at the core. In terms of human relationships, this leads to the experience of the polarities of belonging and isolation, dominance and submission, power and impotence, contact and disconnection, recognition and rejection, participation and avoidance" (van Deurzen:1988:39).

Relating this to musical improvisation, we get two sub-fields of tension: First, the tension between 'entering into the music' on the one hand, and analyzing it as something 'outside of' oneself on the other. Second, the relationship between continuity/similarity and variation/contrast in the musical substance. The latter sub-field is already well researched in music theory, although not often within an explicit dialectical framework.

FAMILIARITY AND CURIOSITY – THE UNSTABLE NATURE OF THE ACTING SUBJECT IN MAKING MUSIC

An attentive creative improviser is situated the fundamental dialogue between *doing* and *receiving*. The improviser is and must be *different* and *separate* from the music in so far as he or she is making up strategies, doing informal musical analysis, labeling musical units, identifying musical processes, and challenging the material in ever new ways. At the same time, the improviser is *one* with the music in an infant-mother like *symbiosis,* constantly nurturing a need for familiar groove and secure belonging. The state of combined childlike devotion and adult-like control in relating to the music is crucial.

Paul Berliner identifies this paradox in his interviews with jazz musicians; the calls for 'letting go' and 'let the music play you' are as frequent as the calls for taking control and being active in shaping the music. He states that "[t]his paradoxical relationships between musical actions calling for a passive performance posture and others calling for precise artistic control contributes to the mystique that surrounds improvisation" (Berliner 1994:219). Surely, it is a kind of mystique. At the same time, though, it is not very different from the mystique that we all live in our coming to terms with the need for *belonging* in familiar intimacy and warmth, and *individualization* in action, divergence and self-evaluation.

This corresponds to the struggle between the 'discontinuous' and the 'continuous' in George Bataille's classic book *Erotism* (Bataille 1986). We are discontinuous beings in keeping ourselves as separated individuals, but we long for the continuous in being fundamentally tied to the world and to other people. Eroticism is *the* field of most intense tensions and battles here. "Erotic activity, by dissolving the separate beings that participate in it, reveals their fundamental continuity, like the waves of a stormy sea" (ibid. p. 22). We strive for unity and continuity, but these states are also threatening to us, as they violate our stable sense of individuality, thus bringing the intensity of life close to extinction and death. I believe that contemplating this analogy between the human condition and musical challenges has a creative potential for musicians.

Apart from mere contemplation, how does one develop skills for handling this 'mystique' in practice? Impressive analytical, technical and creative skills must be united with the courage to let go of control, and the courage to engage in something that you can never know the outcome of on beforehand. You have to dare 'losing' yourself without guaranties as to how and when you get yourself back. You have to dare the encounter with the challenging unknown within what is familiar.

Helm Stierlin talks of a *labor* necessary in human relations in order to live the dilemma between symbiosis and separateness fruitfully and dialectically: "Through this work we transcend the narcissism that keeps us from recognizing in the other anything but what is already known and familiar – that is, ourselves. This work makes us capable of incorporating the other's difference in us. Thereby, we ourselves become more

complex, and gain greater opportunities for developing the relationship and our psychological understanding. But thereby, we envisage differences on a deeper level, differences that again has to be accommodated and transcended [opphevet]" (Stierlin 1974:53 – my translation, from the Norwegian version).

I do think that this 'labor' in many ways corresponds to the improviser's challenges in constantly discovering the music anew, in seeing new 'ways' and new solutions, and in bringing fresh curiosity to the situation, while at the same time hanging on to familiarity and intimacy with the musical landscape. When improvisation is flowing, it is precisely these oppositions that are constantly enriching each other in a dynamic movement. When the music is *not* flowing, the challenges are experienced as burdensome and alienating. Neither oneness nor curiosity is then blooming. Still, these are moments that should be lived without too much fear, because they nonetheless represent potential for breakthroughs and radical synthesis through honest search, craftsmanship and strokes of luck as well.

Of course, no single technique or fixed method of practicing can ensure success in this dynamic field. Still, I would like to suggest the task of playing phrases or making musical events with an explicit focus on combining at-homeness and surprise; with the aim of getting a firmer grip of practical ways to unite with the music and confront it at the same time. This can be done through exploitation of intervals, harmonic contents, registral direction, different voicings, etc. – in short, every musical parameter routinely worked on by aspiring improvisers can be subject to this creative work.

Furthermore, in practicing, the improviser should open up to the powerful *experiencing of analogies* between 'life' and 'art' along the lines drawn above. Much is to be gained for skilled musicians by just letting the music happen while reaching for an existential encounter with the situation as such: reaching for the *feeling* of being one with the music while at the same time being an agent confronting it.

VARIATION AND CONTINUITY

This work can involve drastic personal development and therapeutic processes. But it can also be found on a very practical level, where embracing familiarity can be experienced in elements of *repetition* and *coherence*, while differentiated manipulation lies in *variation* and musical *contrast*. Thus, our somewhat speculative psychological use of this polarity is closely connected to that which ties it to established music theory, in fields like motive analysis and rhythm; fields that are also heavily commented upon by jazz musicians in interviews. In these statements, one can often identify a basic preference for balance between repetition and variation.

The ways in which you can invent motives, repeat them and manipulate through compositional techniques, are well known to most jazz improvisers. Relating his psychodynamic theory to esthetic experience, Helm Stierlin says that "we love a picture or a melody when they combine the beauty of the unknown with the beauty of that which is known to us" (Stierlin 1974:55f – my translation). The basic notion is that of *lust*: "In our striving for lust, chasing that which is new always walks hand in hand with the need for that which is the same, the need for what is known" (ibid. p. 53). In these matters, Stierlin draws explicit parallels between esthetic experience and the psychology of relations and sexology, and these are parallels that I believe are very useful for the phenomenology of improvisation. The improviser's work in developing skills for establishing continuity and variation, coherence and deviation in the musical substance – and more generally, to achieve the synthesis of secure familiarity and creative surprise – resembles the work needed to develop and deepen an intimate relationship. You have to be devoted in worshiping the familiar, the rituals and the at-homeness of belonging. At the same time you have to be devoted to looking for possibilities of development and growth, for new 'themes' and meaningful contrasts in interaction patterns.

SCHEMATA THEORY – PROTOTYPES AND GENERATIVE ACTS

At this stage, we should also refer to a completely different field of psychological theory – cognitive schemata theory. There is, of course, no room for any thorough introduction to such a vast and important field, but I still want to outline this linkage because it offers insights that are particularly valuable to us in exploring the difference vs. sameness dialectics. In cognitive schemata theory we deal with research on *'information packages'* and on *prescriptions* for action, by which relevant knowledge of a certain kind of situation, scene or activity is held together and integrated in a way that makes it easier for the actor to select sensory data, organize them meaningfully, interpret them quickly, and choose appropriate action on the basis of this. Humans have this kind of schematas for standardized types of action and categorized fields of objects encountering us in our perception.

The building of an improviser's cognitive apparatus for interpreting the musical landscape and finding 'ways' in it can be understood in terms of schemata theory. The interaction between more or less fixed schematas and a constantly flowing *sensory input* is basic. This resembles the interaction between 'top-down' and 'bottom up' processing of information often referred to in cognitive psychology. We orient ourselves using stereotypes, model objects and pre-understanding. But we live dynamically from the fuel of sensory input challenging and enriching precisely this pre-understanding. If schematas are not there, nothing makes sense. If schematas are not efficiently negotiated, selected, combined and processed, the flow of improvisation will stall and disintegrate. But if schematas are too tight and rigid, if we are not able to open up to being challenged, to form new classes of objects, to dig in to the qualities of objects with acute attention to detail, and to look for fresh links between objects, then improvisation becomes a dull and predictable procedure.

A main point in schemata theory is that scripts and scenes are often *generalized* or *inexact* representations of situations or actions (or complexes of actions). This kind of representation facilitates information processing while also opening up for new behavior and *creative* solutions. When orienting yourself through inexact schematas, you get a quicker grip on the landscape, and you envision possibilities for action in the form of "sketches", not always highly detailed programs. Thus, there will always emerge different *variants* of the same schemata, with differing degrees of deviation and 'newness'. When a schemata is treated so freely that it runs the risk of disintegration, we have the following options: Either, the actor can withdraw toward 'acceptable' variations and act in more conventional ways according to the original schemata, or he or she can establish a *new* schemata – related to, but distinct from, the old one.

Thus, schemata theory integrates and specifies familiarity and creative differentiation in one and the same model. Forming, sustaining and modifying schematas is a basic human capacity and necessity. On a very fundamental level, then, the improviser works with an innate capacity of creative innovation in secure, familiar landscapes. I would say that the dilemma between sameness and difference has a potential for practical solutions right here. Exploring and contemplating this basic human mechanism is likely to be a useful tool in the pedagogies of improvisation. We should focus on having a sufficient number of relevant schematas to interpret and handle the musical situations that arise. We should help students developing sufficiently *profiled* and worked-trough schematas to facilitate a quick and efficient retrieval process from long term memory. At the same time we should challenge them towards getting sufficiently *flexible* schematas to prevent their musical actions from being automated and predictable. These are basic keys to flowing musical improvisation.

CREATIVITY IN OTHER METAPHORS – LANGUAGE AND THOUGHT

Paul Berliner uses the notion of 'musical ideas' as the basic unit in the improviser's *Lebenswelt* and its creative processes, and he relates this to creativity in language and verbal thinking in general:

"[I]mprovisers constantly strive to put their thoughts together in different ways, going over old ground in search of new. The activity is much like creative thinking in language, in which the routine process is largely devoted to rethinking. By ruminating over formerly held ideas, isolating particular aspects, examining their relationships to the features of other ideas, and, perhaps, struggling to extend ideas in modest steps and refine them, thinkers typically have the sense of delving more deeply into the possibilities of their ideas. There are, of course, also the rarer moments when they experience discoveries as unexpected flashes of insight and revelation" (Berliner 1994:216).

The main focus here is how the formation of freshness and newness in musical improvisation can be seen analogous to the production of new sentences with familiar words in common language, and analogous to the one develops one's chains of thought by constantly going over old material anew, searching for new constellations and interrelations.

This quotation from Berliner offers a powerful tool for approaching the problem of novelty or innovation in jazz – the endless discussion of *what* can pass as creative improvisation. Here, we often find a conflict between avant-garde attitudes on the one hand and neo-classicist ones at the other, where the first party tries to monopolize the definition of novelty – and, in fact, of creativity at large. Using Berliner's analogy, one can claim that it is totally arrogant not to recognize the freshness and newness happening within familiar stylistic boundaries every time a musician approaches the stylistic area with openness and the desire to "say something" in his or her here-and-now-situation. Basically, one does not have to invent a new language to tell a new story. Anything that is *experienced* as a creative encounter between a devoted musical consciousness and a musical substance, *is* in fact fresh newness – from the point of view of this particular musician at the very least – and must be recognized as such. The fact that other musicians or critics may not necessarily have similar experiences of this musical happening can, of course, be brought into a discussion of *what kind of* creativity one favors. But it should not be used in out-defining other people's branches of musical activity as un-creative.

Furthermore, the quoted passage hints to the possibility of the *overwhelming* in experiencing creative processes. When encountering 'sacred otherness' in innovations in flowing musical improvisation – be it the freshness inside of known stylistic borders, novelty in 'playing with' these borders, or innovations in braking them successfully – familiarity and differentiation is in our terms dialectically united in growth. The improviser has entered into the music and achieved intimacy, while at the same time transcended what is known and safe in a daring act of creativity. These moments are crucial: "It is in dramatic movements from formerly mastered phrases to unrehearsed patterns, from commonly transacted physical maneuvers to those outside the body's normal reach or hold, and from familiar frames of reference within compositional forms to uncalculated structural positions, that improvisers typically push the limits of their artistry" (Berliner 1994:217).

Now, on to the third basic dilemma…

III. GRATIFICATION VS. FRUSTRATION

Without gratification from one's needs being met, there can be no warm feeling of safety. But without challenging encounters with obstacles and resistance, we will not build independence and skills in problem solving. The infant first and foremost has to experience the world as trustworthy. A "warm care received by the infant in response to his needs" (Løvlie 1982:93) is probably also crucial to the building of trustful relations at later stages in life. But at the same time, as Anne-Lise Løvlie puts it: "[W]ithout obstacles the infant becomes unaware of himself as the centre for his own actions" (ibid.). Thus, the self is built through experiences of limits and challenges.

Furthermore, it is suggested that the ability to conceptualize and come to terms with *deferred* gratification is grounded in the initial feeling of safety and of needs being met. Løvlie talks of an 'optimal' frustration; which is a kind of resistance facing the infant in the right amount and at the right time, were the feeling of mastery is developed in an environment of *challenges in a safe terrain*, and where gratification is intensely enjoyed without getting stuck in narcissism.

Importantly, 'frustration' has a dual meaning here; it is relevant both in the sense of *postponing* gratification and in the sense of *disappointment* or disaster. We are now ready to specify the dialectical theme: Positively, this polarity embraces *sensuous well-being* and *security* through gratification on the one hand, and development through *challenges* and *building of lust over time* on the other. On the dark side, when the polarity is not lived dynamically and the dialectic is frozen, its negative counterpart emerges: On the one hand, a 'blind' desire that recognizes neither the passing of time nor the other as a separate entity – that keeps one from achieving the deeper satisfaction based on patience and lust built over time. On the other hand; you get a constantly frustrated being-in-the-world or in the music, where you don't really take in moments of joy or satisfaction, and where the encounters with problems and challenges fail to bring secure development, because one always moves from one disappointment/dissatisfaction directly to another.

GRATIFICATION VS. FRUSTRATION			
Frozen dialectics		**Dynamic Potential**	
'blind desire', lost in short-sight, unable to build over time	constand frustration, not able to take in and really enjoy satisification	development through challenges, building of lust over time	sensuous well-being, security through needs being met

DISAPPOINTMENTS AND "MUSICAL SAVES"

Relating this to musical improvisation, we start by considering disappointments in the sense of errors or musical events that are experienced as un-satisfying. Jazz musicians often talk of the challenge in *using* such events constructively. In the art of the moment there is no 'undo button' – what you have played is unquestionably there. When you disappoint yourself, it is therefore crucial to be able to transform disappointment into a kind of challenge that can enter into a dynamic dialectical movement toward satisfying totalities. Paul Berliner states that "[i]mprovisers cannot retrieve their unintended phrases or unsuccessful 'accidents'. Rather, they react to them immediately, endeavoring to integrate them smoothly into their performances. Mistakes, in particular, they treat as spontaneous compositional problems requiring immediate musical solutions. The solutions result in what may properly be described as musical saves" (Berliner 1994:210).

The process of improvisation is always risky, and pianist Kenny Barron says: "[P]art of the act of performing jazz is taking chances, and sometimes the chances you take don't work. But the craft is taking an idea that doesn't work and turning it into something that does work" (Kenny Barron in (ibid. p. 210)). This has the potential of reducing the impression of a mistake as a mistake, and if integration is successful, what was in the outset a non-fitting alien element, can become meaningful and at-home in the musical setting.

Different 'musical saves' can in time enter into the reservoir of standardized improvisational tools available for quick retrieval and use. "Beyond the immediacy of these occurrences, artists sometimes 'remember their successful solutions to past accidents'. The musical saves become part of their musical knowledge, and they can draw on them when they come across other musical circumstances involving similar elements" (ibid. p. 215, quotations from bass player Chuck Israels). Thus, representations of troublesome situations and their respective strategies for solutions are parts of am improviser's cognitive apparatus, by way of

'scripts' for the handling of certain 'scenes'. Sometimes, what was initially experienced as a problem, coupled with a spontaneously produced solutions of this kind, can make up a totality of so much satisfaction that the improviser establish a new 'lick' or a new tool from it. These tools can be used intentionally on later occasions, also without any feeling of initial disappointment. Thus, a successful dialectical movement in a troublesome situation can result in a new totality that will in itself produce lust at later stages, because it incorporates tension and release in a secure unfolding.

SATISFACTION AND LONGING

In the dialectic between gratification and frustration in the sense of *postponing resolution* or *building lust* there is a clear connection to the moment vs. duration dialectic treated earlier: This frustration is a kind of friction in which you have to let go of immediate gratification in order to achieve satisfaction on the basis of the unfolding over time. This often involves a lot of hard work to embody and carry out.

Still, the experience of gratification from a musical landscape will always be based on what we have earlier labeled 'emergent qualities' in a 'musical object' on some level of 'resolution'. And unfolding over time can only be conceptualized as a whole or as a Gestalt, experienced in a subjective now, and as such they are *moments* of intensity. Hence, gratification on the basis of extended duration and unfolding will always be phenomena of the moment, although perhaps with a different feeling of *fullness* resulting from its being based on perception or activity spanning over a larger period of time.

The improviser switches between different levels of resolution in her zooming in on the musical landscape, and the forsaking frustration often lies exactly in the separation between levels: you have to give up your tendency to focus all your lust and attention on one level, because of the danger of losing the grip of another important level. Or because of the danger of lust-based approaches to separate moments leading to a lack of satisfaction with the flow of the unfolding at large. Putting your lust into details is necessary. But putting all your lust into a detail is also dangerous as you can lose your perspective, harm your technique, and seriously interrupt the flow.

SEXOLOGY AS A GUIDE FOR IMPROVISERS?

Here, the connection between the phenomenology of improvisation and that of eroticism and intimate relations is so crucial that we have to develop it a bit further. Helm Stierlin also couples esthetic experience to the field of eroticism at this point: "You have to be able to live in forsaking, work with it, to prevent desire from being extinguished in enjoyment. This goes for the gratification of vegetative and sexual needs …, as well as for the relatively complex and often independent esthetic, affective, social and other human needs" (Stierlin 1974:62 – my translation). The possibilities for gratification will always outnumber the ones you choose to pursue. It is a basic challenge to "liberate gratification from the lack of gratification" (ibid.), so that you can enjoy the releases, culminations and joys that are actually realized without too much sorrow over the possibilities for gratification that are not.

This is, I think, immensely important in human relations and lust-seeking musical activity alike. Improvisers can find growth here: You have to be desire-focused and lust-seekingly present in the music, both as a *process* and as *stationeries* of release and enjoyment. Over-simplifying for heuristic reasons a vast and nuanced field, we can draw on the stereotypes of male and female sexuality here; stereotypes where the masculine is characterized by its directedness, linearity and climax-orientation – but also its swiftness and unreliability, while the feminine is more oriented toward atmosphere, presence and duration, a more subtle ecstasy, and less toward a "one, major release" as the ultimate goal.

This field brings about a wide variety of potential difficulties in intimate relations, but also a wide variety of possibilities for development, growth and fertilization of our intensities. We have to live our own intensities in openness and respect for the qualities of the other's intensity. A musical improvisation should perhaps

have a resolute and determined feeling, directed toward a climax (or a limited number of climaxes), thereafter getting swiftly down toward an ending. However, it is just as important to be constantly present in, and attentive to, the smaller and subtle points of gratification, and to be devoted to the sacredness of every detail. You *can* choose to refine and isolate an aggressive, un-compromising style of playing – and you can choose to refine and isolate a searching, humble and receiving style. But, in most cases there is much more to gain by working on dialectical solutions in this dilemma. This means going for determined clarity united with contemplative humbleness, without getting stuck in a middle-of-the-road kind of non-profiled playing. Precisely here, I do believe that improvisers can draw important inspiration from androgynous characters, characters where the two sides of the dilemma are integrated in a single personality. And improvisers can draw inspiration from experiences of successful *encounters* between different kinds of intensities and forms of sexuality. The potential for liberation and fertility is actualized and released by the uniting of oppositions in eroticism and music alike.

IV. STABILITY VS. STIMULATION

Stability through order and *rhythm* is necessary. But stagnation is just around the corner if we are not faced with elements of stimulating deviation or novelty. The dialectic at this point can be outlined as follows: In its constructive version this polarity embraces the secure and stable experience of reliable rhythm and recognizable order that gives the *predictability* needed to free cognitive and emotional energy for creativity – an on the other hand, the newness of interesting stimuli and creative components that are taken into the system. By frequent intrusion of fresh elements the whole is challenged, and by integration and accommodation (cf. Piaget) of these elements the whole is developed dialectically. Thus, the ever-changing, but still reliable, whole, is made both stable and exciting/pulsating. In its destructive counterpart on the dark side, however, this polarity covers the fatigue of stability where repetitive patterns become un-dynamically stalling instead of grooving on the one hand. On the other hand, it covers the restlessness of over-stimulation, where fresh elements craving attention and offering novelty are never given the time or space to really work and be integrated in the whole in thorough processes.

STABILITY VS. STIMULATION			
Frozen dialectics		**Dynamic Potential**	
fatigue, repetition as stalling boredom	restless over-stimulation	interesting stimuli, fresh elements	reliable rhythm, predictability, repetition as life and groove

Stierlin formulates the need for dialectic movement here: "We need stability in a relationship, so that we can satisfy our need for security and safety. But if stability is left to dominate, it leads to stagnation, and the bonds of safety are transformed into heavy burdens. Thus, in a relationship that is to develop, one must always search for an equilibrium between stabilization and stimulation, and always in new and more complex areas" (Stierlin 1974:66 – my translation).

This polarity is closely related to the 'difference vs. sameness' dialectic treated above. What is stimulating will often be something *other than* or *different from* what is presently present. And, of course, stability is often rooted in repetition and sameness. Still, there is a need to thematize stabilization vs. stimulation on its own – especially, in fact, with regard to improvised music with its peculiarities. For it is not the case that stimulating and stabilizing elements necessarily must alternate and replace one another over time during improvisation. The dialectic integration of these opposites in the musical unfolding does not have to happen as changes from one section to another (say, from up-tempo to ballad, from soft to loud, etc.). On the

contrary, integration can happen all the time, in each phrase, and – immensely important – in the fundamental groove.

TENSION AND RELEASE IN DIFFERENT MUSICAL PARAMETERS

In improvisation, dialectics of stimulating excitement and stabilizing release or continuity can be constructed in a number of different musical parameters.

- *Rhythm*

- *Symmetry vs. asymmetrical statements*
  – play with the underlying form in phrases and building blocks.

- *Harmony*
  – with the play of 'inside' and 'outside' choice of notes; with chord substitutions, and the general play on establishing expectations in the listener and choosing to what degree to fulfill them (cf. Leonard Meyer's *Emotion and Meaning in Music* (Meyer 1956)).

- Other parameters like *texture*, *registral movement*, *tone colour*, *phrase lengths*

RHYTHM

Rhythmic tension can be established by shifts in *placement* related to the steady pulse or 'beat'; you can play 'on top of the beat', 'behind the bind' or 'ahead of the beat', as jazz musicians put it. A single phrase can encompass its own tension and release here with subtle variations and challenges to the underlying pulse being built up and released. The possible variations and nuances at this point are huge indeed, and the way an improviser handles rhythmic placement and variation is constitutive of his or her style of playing; both the degree of flexibility and variation employed, and the unifying characteristics of his or her preferred tendencies in rhythmic placement.

In Berliner's interviews we can also find references to a kind of *rhythmic synthesis* that is especially interesting in our context here. Consider this telling statement:

> "See, the triplet feeling in rhythm, 'dah-dah-dah, dah-dah-dah', makes you relax. It makes you hold back; you can't rush triplets. But the duple part of the rhythm is like marches, 'one and two and' or 'one and two and three and four and'. That kind of division of time makes you move ahead, forge ahead, march – 'boom, boom, boom, boom'. That's the push of the rhythm. And that's why it is so nice when you combine those two feelings. Then you get a complete rhythm that marches and still relaxes" (Charli Persip quoted in (Berliner 1994:153)).

Whether or not it is actually impossible to rush triplets is a point up for discussion… But this statement points to what is probably an essential aspect of intriguing jazz rhythms (and folk music from many parts of the world for that matter). The incorporating of different 'feelings' in one and the same basic groove through polyrhythm brings a multi-faced yet integrated whole, that – performed by the best musicians – combines stability and stimulation in a very sophisticated way. Music can combine forward motion with relaxation, directedness with coolness, repetition with variation etc. in *one and the same gesture*, and in one and that same basic groove.

SYMMETRY AND EDGES

Tension from challenges to the underlying symmetry can be established by phrasing in ways that are contrary to the structure on which the improvisation is built or to which it refers: "create interest and suspense by improvising melodic phrases that cross over barlines and assume abstract rhythmic relationships to the meter" (Berliner 1994:198). The form of cool jazz developed in New York in the 1950's

with pianist Lennie Tristano and saxophonists Warne Marsh and Lee Konitz as key figures, stands out in particular at this point; to me it represents a unique fusion of stimulation and stabilization through its immensely complex and highly sophisticated use of intriguing cross-meter structure-challenging phrasing, coupled with a carefulness in volume/loudness, and a kind of 'laid back' attitude that it shared with the rest of the cool jazz movement.

HARMONY

Stimulating elements can be brought into the music by way of harmonic content, too. "[I]t is the relative mixture of pitches inside and outside of the harmony that creates interesting melodies" (Berliner 1994:250). What passes for a 'right' balance in this respect will vary strongly between different stylistic areas, but most branches of jazz do indeed have *some* conception of this fundamental balance – of what is the correctly intriguing harmonic tension, and of what is the correct way to treat dissonances: "[W]hatever the pitch relationships players choose to define as dissonant within the bounds of their jazz idiom or personal style, they regard the artful handling of dissonance as an indication of mature artistry" (ibid. s. 252). Here, there is clearly a parallel between jazz history and the history of Western art music, in that the conception of dissonance, together with directions for esthetically satisfying treatment of them (that is, those dissonances that are at all tolerated in given contexts), make up a constitutive element of stylistic development. The transitions from modality via simple tonic-subdominant-dominant harmony, complex functional harmony, advanced modal systems, atonality and back to neo-classical and neo-romantic ideals are in many respects the same in jazz (the modal blues [prior to its rigid standardization in tonic, subdominant and dominant chords] → New Orleans jazz related to dance tunes, marches, rag time, etc. with their 'simple' chord changes → Swing musicians' careful exploration of the 'upper structure' of chords leading into → the be-bop 'revolution' in complex harmony [although still rooted in standard chord progressions] → modal music employing sophisticated 'Western' (Impressionist) techniques of voicings and harmonic coloring [cf. Bill Evans' work on the legendary *Kind of Blue* album] and oriental flavors → 'free jazz' with more or less complete atonality → return to tonality in both jazz-rock fusion and neo-bop, although often incorporating the experience and techniques of radical freedom in various ways).

Berendt offers a summary of harmony in the history of jazz in (Berendt 1992:177ff). This chapter is informative and well worth reading, but Berendt is probably over-simplifying the relationship between what is 'African' and 'Western' and – in my opinion – under-evaluating the originality and fundamental nature of jazz' intriguing harmonic ambiguity and fuzziness, also in its early decades. Berendt simply suggests that jazz *borrowed* its harmony, while contributing a unique *rhythmic* intensity not found in Western music – the 'blue note' being the only 'original' harmonic contribution by jazz. There is, of course, some truth in this, but I think we have to realize that the *feeling* produced by what I take to be the synthesis of stability and stimulation in blue notes – notes that are in fact both dissonances and non-dissonances at the same time – is both 1) deeply constitutive of jazz feeling and 2) in fact, highly original in music history at large. The ambiguously flexibly flatted fifths, thirds and sevenths are clearly points of stimulation in that they must appear as dissonances of some kind to any ear at all familiar with the experience of straight, well-tempered Western harmony. Still, these notes are clearly points of rest and finality in jazz, in a way that dissonances are usually not experienced in Western tonal music. The blue notes do not necessarily 'resolve' into consonance; they are emphasized and appreciated in themselves as fullness and as intense, fuzzy completion. I think this points to a very fundamental stimulation/stabilization dialectic intrinsic to jazz experience and performance.

On a less speculative level, Paul Berliner also identifies a kind of *harmonic syncopation* that is interesting: "subtly offsetting pitch selection from the piece's structure, drawing on pitches that either anticipate the following chord or delay the preceding chord's resolution" (Berliner 1994:198). The *integration* of subtleties like this is, again, a balancing of stimulating deviation and stable normality. In improvised music based on chord changes, the predictability and strictness of the changes is counter-worked by the use of

foreshadowing and delaying of the harmonic progression. But the musical unfolding stands in risk of disintegration if you over-stimulate your improvisation this way, not being able to 'bring it down'.

Advanced improvisers often bring all these forms of harmonic synthesizing – 'inside' vs. 'outside' pitches, blue notes challenging the tempered system, and harmonic syncopation in foreshadowing and delaying – to impressing levels. The richness of variation and ambiguity is integrated in a secure *handling* of the multi-layeredness, and you get a special kind of *fullness* in the harmonic content of an improvisation, based on constant synthesis of what is challenging and what is familiar.

OTHER PARAMETERS

Other areas, too, can stage the dialectics between stabilization and stimulation. Again, Paul Berliner identifies: "… movements creating other contrasts: for example, between increased and decreased rhythmic activity, inflected and uninflected pitches, and registral ascents and descents. Each produces schemes of tension and release, ultimately impuring inventions with a sense of flow. So, too, does the progression among such different musical events as lyrical phrases; driving, finger-generated patterns; intricate chromatically embellished lines; swinging bebop gestures; and diminished chord patterns that depart from a prevailing meter" (Berliner 1994:198). Development over time in phrase length and register can also be effective: "[A]rtists may create a sense of balance and continuity within the larger designs of long consecutive phrases by remembering and using phrase length itself as a model. Alternatively, players develop ideas by inventing consecutive phrases, each slightly longer than the one before, as if an outgrowth from it. … In other instances, soloists convey a sense of development by gradually expanding the range of consecutive phrases" (ibid.). Elsewhere, I have devised a quantitative method of revealing patterns like this in transcribed solos. I treat phrase length, harmonic deviation and accenting-contrary-to-the-basic-meter in a way that produces simple graphs showing development over time effectively (Gustavsen 1997).

REPOSE IN TENSION

In a philosophy of music written several decades ago, the dialectics between tension and release in esthetic experience is described like this:

"The aesthetic experience is a feeling for an object of such intensity as to result in the identification of the person with the object of experience; he becomes one with it and reposes in it. The aesthetic experience is thus a condition of repose in tension, the tension being due to the intense feeling, while the repose arises from the person dwelling in the object. This condition of repose in tension turns aesthetic experience into perfect experience, and therefore leads also to the culmination of human experience" (Max Schoen in (Edwards 1956:16)).

Even though the musician in the act of playing is likely to be more focused on the *craft* and the *production* side of the music than this ideal of contemplative experience allows, an improviser is also connected to his or her music through a similar combination of 'repose' in a being *in* the musical objects and the landscape produced by their relations, and a 'tension' in the constant intensity wishing to create something. In successful improvisation the improviser often experience being able to *trust* the music as something that *carries* and *gives*. Then, intensity and stimulation is staged in a secure environment, and the fresh products of efforts and creativity are infused in the whole in constant movements of integration. However, when the music is *not* flowing, soothing repose is transformed into frozen un-dynamics, and the musical efforts you make, become un-organic *forcing* of the unfolding. You try to establish the flow, but instead you get a frozen conflict where repose is replaced by uncomfortable un-dynamics, and where creative tension is reduced to an unresolved, unreleased, ever-more-frustrated-erotic-esthetic drive or yearning. The kind of frozen dialectic stalling the creative flow at times like these is difficult – yet not necessarily impossible – to transform back into a more constructive process.

Repose in tension is the state of alert calmness, of excited ease, of flexible stringency that we should always go for. It is a mysterious thing, but you can practice it, and thus increase the likelihood of it happening. Employ a combination of

a) practical training in playing technique (not at all covered in this essay) focusing on muscular alertness-calmness,

b) training in "musical saves" (cf. above) to strengthen the ability to transform disappointments into creative happenings,

c) practical/theoretical exercises in harmony and rhythm – create your own normality-deviation dialectics etudes on these and other musical parameters, and

d) mental training contemplating the quasi-sacred paradox of intensity-in-the-midst-of-dilemmas and flexibility-in-the-midst-of-directedness-and-going-for-it.

GROOVE – THE EMBODIED SYNTHESIS OF STIMULATION AND STABILIZATION?

Moving on from the paradox of repose in tension, we should now focus explicitly on a term that is already used several times: 'groove'. In research trying to explain aspects other than the harmonic and motivic ones of 'ethnic' or rhythmic music, this term is often a point of both inspiration and confusion. Numerous attempts have been made to define it. Here, we shall neither try to review these attempts comprehensively, nor set out to make our own concise definition. Suffice it to say that most scholars approaching the qualities of groove find that it embraces a basic, repetitive rhythmic pattern, but that the term also implies a mystifying 'something more'. A groove is an extensively repeated rhythmic motion or pattern that can be varied and 'stretched', but nevertheless makes up a stable *foundation* for the musical unfolding. A groove is also a kind of *state* – based on these rhythmic qualities. In evaluating music, the adjective 'groovy' will mean the embodied successfulness with which this is achieved. A groove is something you enter into ('getting into the groove') or establish, and, having entered, the groove then is a stimulating space, place or environment for activity and enjoyment; "[a] groove is a comfortable place to be" (Feld 1994). Simultaneously, a groove is a place that can be challenged and transformed. A groove is an embodied musical phenomenon, where cyclic rhythm and compelling 'drive' invite us to participation and motion.

So, a groove is a field of compelling potential for enjoyment, a field of secure cyclic movement, a field of challenging subtle variation, etc. In all of this, we can spot a clear connection to the dialectic between stimulation and stabilization. I believe that strong *groove quality* can be taken to represent an optimized dialectical unifying of stimulation and stability. In a groove that works well, you are being met, both in your need for safety and in your need for challenge and transcendence. Order and transgression is staged in one and the same act.

Now, for the last polarity…

V. CLOSENESS VS. DISTANCE

In the last one of Stierlin's dialectical themes we highlight the tension between devotion and control by the use of a metaphor of *distance* in relating to the music. First, let us see how Stierlin himself expresses central aspects of this polarity:

"Desire and pleasure request closeness. However, this closeness will be the end of desire and pleasure proper if one does not work for a certain distance – a distance to one's own needs, and to the other who can satisfy these needs. It is through this work of distancing that we can over and over again rediscover closeness" (Stierlin 1974:68 – my translation).

From time to time, we have to "break our emotional attachment to the other in order to understand him" (ibid. p. 69) – and this involves great struggles:

"This work of distancing is always difficult. It can … only happen in a painful feeling of being lonely and exiled. When moving away from others, we hurt the primitive animal inside us that seeks its vitality and power through a primary emotional participation in others. We leave the tribe [or tree trunk – the Norwegian word 'stammen' can have both meanings] that carries us. … The difficulties and pain in the work of distancing equals the difficulties and pain in the work of creating closeness. We are over and over again presented with both kinds of work" (ibid.).

From Stierlin's somewhat dramatic descriptions we move on to specifying this dilemma towards our context. Creative dialectical potential in this field lies on the one hand in devotional closeness where you give in to being *surrounded* by the music, to be intimately at its mercy, and to respond to its qualities from an 'organic' symbiosis: musician-and-music is one. On the other hand it embraces the distance needed to switch between different levels of resolution of time, and focuses or aspects, to differentiate musical objects, to understand what processes are at work, and to se musical 'traps' in time to avoid them.

Transformed into its destructive counterparts on the 'dark side', however, frozen dialectics leads to the helplessness of undifferentiated closeness and the kind of 'at-its-merciness' where you are a victim of circumstances and don't know how to control your actions and their consequences. On the other hand of the dark destructive side lies the alienation in distance where you don't 'get in touch with' the music or the flow of the relationship, and cannot break the barrier against emotional participation; where you operate in the musical landscape from strategies that are 'un-organic' in that they are not founded in a real musical *presence*.

When the one side of the dialectic is left to dominate in a romantic relationship, in a parent-child relation, or – so I suggest – in a musical mind; frozen, destructive, repetitive patterns are likely to develop. We need closeness-and-distance, yet they are contradictory.

CLOSENESS VS. DISTANCE			
Frozen dialectics		**Dynamic Potential**	
alienation, blocked emotional participation, un-organic strategies	helplessness in undifferentiated closeness, victim of circumstances, no control over action	distance enough to… • switch between different aspects of music, • zoom in on different levels resolution, • differentiate musical objects, • understand processes, • identify 'traps'	being surrounded and intimately exposed, organic symbiosis

This dilemma is in many ways connected to the ones already presented. Closeness will often be a quality of the immediate moment, while distance opens the door for extended conceptualization of unfoldings over time – cf. the theme of *moment vs. duration*. Furthermore, closeness will imply sameness and identification, while distance offers differentiation and perception of separateness – cf. the theme of *difference vs. sameness*. Still, it is highly relevant to treat closeness vs. distance as a separate dialectical theme – it thematizes the relationship between musician and music in the very compelling physical-embodied metaphor of distance, a metaphor that is in fact experienced by many musicians as very 'real', and in a fascinating way it focuses on a *multidimensionality of being present* in the music.

THE SINGING MIND

Let us take this dilemma further, and mention a couple of 'healing tools' that can help us move from stagnation into fruitful dynamics: Jazz musicians frequently make references to *singing* as a significant device for their creative musical agency. Singing can work in many ways for instrumentalists.

First, as a pedagogic tool – you develop your 'inner ear' and your phrasing skills when you supplement playing your instrument with vocal improvisation and vocal imitations during practice.

Second, singing can also be a great help in performance – you can sing what you play, either constantly or in parts of the musical unfolding, either out loud or as barely audible humming, and this often helps you phrase better and create more 'lyrical' and 'organic' lines.

Finally, singing also works on a more abstract level as a metaphor for playing – 'to play is to sing'. The special kind of *embodiedness* or *intimacy with the improvised line* that the song metaphor expresses is very interesting. Saxophonist Lee Konitz states: "Improvising is a singing, whistling phenomenon when it's really happening. … It's a matter of getting intricately and sophisticatedly involved with a melodic line so that it is one with the performer" (Lee Konitz in (Berliner 1994:180)). Paul Berliner goes on to conclude: "If you can't sing it, you can't play it. It may be possible to perform phrases on an instrument mechanically … by translating representations like chord symbols directly into finger patterns without prehearing the sounds for which they stand, but singing requires that artists both grasp ideas firmly in their imaginations and invest them with expressive qualities" (ibid. s. 181).

David Sudnow uses the expression 'being singingly present' about the kind of lyrical-devotional closeness that releases strong melodic improvisation in his own playing (Sudnow 1993:87). This is a kind of closeness to the 'sorts of actions' and 'sorts of places' (or scenes and scripts in cognitive terms), that is not totally symbiotic, yet still deeply *connected* and *involved*. It points to a cross-modality in the cognitive representations of the music, and in the cognitive structures guiding the creative act; a cross-modality that gives fullness and dialogue in improvisational intensity. The improviser converses theoretical representation, rehearsed motor-programs, abstract images of structures, texture etc., *and* spontaneous song. This conversing is crucial both to taking in and understanding the present music, and to creating new elements in the musical unfolding.

When the improvised line becomes 'one with the performer' through the combination of a singing approach and an instrumental approach, we avoid the lack of perspective in symbiotic unity that can follow from a musician only focusing on his or her instrument, or on the 'inner pressure' in isolation; we get a unity between music and musician which is excessively *dialogic* because of its extended multidimensionality, and yet *organic* because of its intimately embodied source.

To me, the metaphor of singing really shows a liberating way in the problematics of closeness vs. distance. Singing what you play helps you get a fuller perspective or feeling for what you're doing. It offers *distance* because it involves a dual presence in the music (both your fingers and your singing mind is working), while at the same time facilitating organic *unity* between musician and music, because singing really comes from the inner core of ear-trained musicality. Thus, alienation in distance is fought by the very same tool that helps you avoid the stiffened closeness from getting lost in the physical instrument and your technique struggles. Just as 'groove' represents an optimized dialectical synthesis of stimulation and stability, so does 'singing' represent a synthesis of closeness and distance.

CLOSENESS VS. DISTANCE AS BODY VS. MIND

Another way of approaching the problematics of this dialectical theme is to take closeness as the physical or immediate, and distance as the intellectual or reflective. This is, of course, a very questionable

simplification. The physical is never totally immediate – everything we feel is mediated in some way. Still, this cliché can open up for some interesting perspectives. The challenge of reaching dialectical dynamics between intimate closeness on the one hand and clarity from a distance on the other, lies in finding a unity of non-verbal sensing and intuitive acting on the one hand, and conceptualized reflection on the other.

The improviser must find a way to be musically present that releases the body's potential for 'smooth' executing of complicated movements without having to spend much attentional resources on controlling and monitoring these movements. But the presence on stage also has to release creative and, to a certain extent, *critical* conversation with the learned movements. And it must release the ability to discover fresh musical objects on a multitude of levels of resolution. Analyzing from a distance cannot be allowed to constitute a totally *different* being-in-the-music than the spontaneous closeness; they must integrate in dialectic dynamics.

Paul Berliner reflects upon his empirical data in connection with the notion of 'the singing mind': "Under the aegis of the singing mind, there are moments in which musicians see no further into their evolving line than a few pitches, their body and mind so tightly joined as to be fully absorbed into the performance's immediate progress" (Berliner 1994:189). "At other moments … the ideas that soloists realize during performances depend as much on the body's own actions as on the body's synchronous response to the mind. The body can take momentary control over particular activities ... while the mind shifts its focus to the next idea" (ibid. p. 190). Here, we see that the bodily presence in improvisation can unite with reflection in mutually enforcing processes, it can almost *absorb* reflection, and it can also *supplement* it so that the improviser has several mechanisms of control or monitoring that work in parallel. However, the feeling of totally separate entities of understanding and agency in music can not be sustained over a long period of time without the danger of alienation. To avoid disintegration of the musical unfolding, one has to move towards *fusion* in improvisational control organs and monitoring, and then perhaps to subsequent re-differentiation for further nuances and flexibility.

"TRAVELING ALONG THE CONTOUR OF AN EVOLVING PHRASE"

Paul Berliner formulates a telling metaphor for a presence that incorporates focusing on details and overviewing the whole on the level of single phrases in linear improvisation when he describes the improviser as "traveling along the contour of an evolving phrase" (Berliner 1994:187). This metaphor highlights both the details, the movement and the contour as a whole, or – in other words: the distributed substrate, the unfolding trajectory and the emergent qualities of the resulting musical object. The 'traveling' along a musical contour still in the making is the improviser's attentive, sensible and creative work where the basic 'curves' and 'dots' of the evolving musical happening are negotiated and experienced relationally, in a holistic movement. The improviser embraces the closeness needed to appreciate the tiny nuances and the potential for *expression* lying on the micro level, as well as the distance needed to be present on several levels of resolutions, where sums of choices made on the micro level make up musical Gestalts. Here, there is a tight connection between the polarities "moment vs. duration" and "closeness vs. distance", and the advice developed earlier to *listen for the emergent qualities* while a musical object is still in the making, applies equally well at this point.

Also, this metaphor points to the paradox-ridden relationship between improvisation as *setting courses* and *directing flow* on the one hand, and improvisation as *going with the flow* and *obeying the implications of what is already there* on the other hand. When the improviser 'travels along a contour', this implies both *following* a movement in obedience and *creating* the very same movement. Improvisational choices of path must be taken on the basis of a closeness that makes the improviser really *experience* the musical unfolding and adjust humbly to it, but also on the basis of a distance that makes him or her capable of creating overviews and developing fresh directions or curves in the contours of the music.

THE SCULPTOR

We include another telling metaphor from Berliner's book: the sculptor's work with his or her physical material in a constant dialogue between the material facts of the stone and the intentions or strategies of the artist. "A sculptor chipping at a marble block mediates between the initial vision for the sculpture and its evolving shape. Each chisel stroke potentially alters its form in unintended ways or reveals new features in the grain's internal flow that suggests modification of the artwork's design" (Berliner 1994:219). This is in many ways parallel to the improviser's relationship to the musical substance – although a sculptor will frequently employ a more thoroughly worked out model of the whole of the work before the chipping really starts. Both forms of art demands closeness in that the artists 'tune' their bodies in line with the material and let themselves *be formed* by what is actually taking place, while at the same time distance enough to avoid getting helplessly stuck when problems arise, and distance enough to conceive of ideas that do not just follow the material along the most obvious patterns but impose challenges and surprise. Again, it is important to focus on evolving Gestalts or wholes; to be attentive to potentials in the material (both obvious/familiar and surprising/fresh potentials) – potentials for establishing emergent qualities in objects – in a process of constant dialogue between given physical substance and your creative energy.

SUBJECTIFICATION VS. OBJECTIFICATION

The capacity for constant movements of *differentiation* and subsequent *integration* is a central theme for Anne-Lise Løvlie. Perceiving the world from one's own standpoint, with one's own needs and desires as a basis, is important. But narcissism is around the corner if one does not simultaneously understand objects as existing outside of oneself, and if one does not see others as separate agents with ontological status of their own. The immediate, self-centered way of experiencing the world – where "the world is experienced only-as-it-relates-to-[my]-needs" (Løvlie 1982:29) – is called *subjectification*, whereas the differentiated approach is called *objectification*. Subjectification and objectification in relation to our surroundings must take place simultaneously to achieve the synthesis of passionate closeness and lucid distance. One must expand, interpret and integrate one's surroundings in a manifold *Lebenswelt* of meanings, relations and emotions. This demands courage to undertake the movement from the safe and familiar into the insecure and unknown – and back. And that we establish an *intimacy* precisely in this movement – an intimacy that opens up for real integrated integration.

The improviser must – as we have explored in many ways by now – take chances. Making music is an act of courage, and great moments often arise when secure at-homeness and breaking of new grounds are mutually enforcing each other. You are safe enough to risk something, and the gratification in successful encounters with the unknown strengthens and expands the at-homeness and readiness for ever new challenges. This ideal situation requires an apparatus of orientation with which you relate to fellow musicians and sounding music out of a combination of sincere, desire-driven subjectification and attentive, differentiating objectification. The feeling of safety requires a certain gratification and a basic subjectification in the playing situation. This safety can in turn open up for flexibility and courage. When an improvisational potential presenting itself to the improviser is to be pursued and developed, the situation requires objectification to *understand* the potential and its relational placement in the musical landscape. In the act of materializing new stuff into the flow of musical unfolding, you focus again on your desire for musical gratification from this placement, however with a kind of objective clarity needed for the freshness to really take its place without being swallowed by the impatient urge for the most *familiar* forms of gratification. Thus, the dialectic of subjectification and objectification is crucial for true musical dynamics.

STATES OF THE BODY BRINGING CLOSENESS AND DISTANCE INTO PLAY

Before leaving the last dilemma, we should also touch upon one of the most 'personal' and poorly researched aspects of making improvised music: postures and movements of the body. There is, of course,

a vast amount of physiological information concerning 'correct' positions and technique, and there are pedagogical systems for achieving efficient use of the body – efficient in the sense of getting a maximum of control and potential with a minimum of physical effort. However, among performers there are significant stocks of embodied knowledge in this area that are seldom formalized or verbalized. How you sit or stand, and how you 'tune' yourself into your instrument is constitutive to the evolving of the *Lebenswelt* of making music, and thus also to the kind of music you are able to produce.

David Sudnow tries to verbalize something here, and talks of the body's 'being at the piano' (Sudnow 1993:83). He writes about how his own playing developed drastically with inspiration from the mere sight of a particular pianist's (Jimmy Rowles') characteristic movements of the head, shoulders, arms and back during ballad playing. It is clear from Sudnow's descriptions that the establishment of a kind of intimate *dialogue* was a crucial breakthrough for him when employing similar movements himself – a dialogue with his own body and its potential, where closeness and distance together made up a fullness. In Sudnow's own embellished language: "[C]onversation with myself now began to take a certain form, looking down at these hands of mine, their ways, my ways of employing them, seeking practically useful terms for conceiving 'my relationship to their ways', reflecting upon how I could employ them, and what it meant, as manageable practices at the keyboard, to 'employ them' for this music to happen" (ibid. s. 84).

Sudnow discovered that a certain kind of circular movements of the arms expressing and strengthening the 'flowing' and flexible qualities of the music, combined with a tapping movement of the foot expressing and strengthening the more metronome-like pulse aspects of the music, released completely new things in his own playing. There is an interesting parallel here to the quotation presented earlier about rhythmic synthesis between 'marching feeling' and 'relaxed feeling' in the combined staging of "dah-dah-dah" and "boom-boom". A forward-confident-marching attitude and a relaxed coolness can thus be united in both musical rhythm and physical presence. And this coupling of the body's and the music's rhythm is crucial, whether the bodily involvement takes the form of tiny, subtle movements or more overt, spastic or dance-like movements.

Often, we need helping devices or techniques to achieve the right synthesis of distance and closeness, also body-wise. It is easy to be 'caught inside', and it is easy to be left 'standing outside'. From my own experience I know that I can sometimes facilitate the overall musical dialogue with just minor adjustments of the way I sit at the piano: increasing the distance from my head to the keyboard slightly can release a feeling of freedom and control that is easily lost when the desire for intimate involvement in the music leads to a jerky and closed closeness with the instrument. The fundamental paradox of this is that the closeness to the music as an unfolding flowing *whole* is strengthened by a minor distancing to the physical instrument or to one particular *angle* in the involvement. And paradoxes like this are found all the time. You work your way through involvement and overviews, through intimacy and distancing.

THE FEAR OF EXTINCTION

Finally, in keeping with Stierlin's own work, we will take these issues even further; towards a very general – and perhaps also somewhat speculative – level. In Stierlin's writing, the challenges of closeness vs. distance are related to a basic anxiety or *Angst*: a fear of death or extinction – and to the fundamental intra-personal *work* of coming to terms with this anxiety in a multitude of situations and relations throughout our life-span.

> "… any development towards a closer relationship to the other will present a challenge to the defense mechanisms … described as our defense against the fear of death. We are challenged to find a new equilibrium between dependence and independence. Our reward will be the intimacy, the complete recognition, that is the safest guarantee against loosing the grip of the balancing …. But this reward can only be achieved if we dare to wake the slumbering monsters, the archaic anxieties from childhood. The close relationship to the other can thus awaken desire, greed and destructiveness

from early childhood, and point these drives to the person to whom we stand helpless, and to whom we have thereby in a way reinstated the child's dependent relationship. We must risk loosing our own ego-limits, and be exposed to an inner terror" (Stierlin 1974:69f – my translation).

Stierlin identifies two basic forms of fear of death: the fear of extinction in enormous loneliness, and the fear of extinction in being swallowed (ibid. p. 70). This corresponds to our reflections concerning 'left standing outside' and 'getting helplessly caught' in the music. You will have to face both these dangers in the process of improvisation. You have to dare to remove yourself from the safe and familiar through a creative distancing, and you have to dare to lose control and be absorbed in closeness. These acts of courage must take place in a dialectical movement, or else you will eventually encounter – precisely – 'death' or extinction. The music stops flowing naturally if you are too far away from it. And it stops developing if you lose your perspective and keep repeating things weather they sound good or not. 'Death' in this sense, then, takes the form of a disintegrated musical unfolding, a lack of gratification through playing, and a loss of self esteem as a musician.

Of course, transferring dramatic motives like these from psychoanalytic theory to music performance is questionable, but I have no doubt that the tension between involvement and control is really working in analogous ways here. And that successful improvisation will normally take a dialectical sublation or *Aufheben* of this dilemma. When the dilemma is handled dialectically, you play in an intimate at-its-merciness to the music while at the same time being able to change its directions, create new forms, objects, directions or sounds etc. out of overviews and control. This combination is a great feeling – it can surely bring about a quasi religious-erotic fulfillment.

SUMMING UP AND MOVING ON

By now, we have explored the situation of musical improvisation eclectically using the 'five dilemmas' from Stierlin and Løvlie, and the fundamental dialectical line of reasoning that lies behind this theory. Each one of the polarities sheds a different light on the challenges facing the improviser. At the same time, there are clear connections and overlappings between them, some of which we have also demonstrated.

 Before ending this talk, I would like now to focus on a theme from jazz *history* that is, on closer examination, tightly connected to most of the a-historical theory presented so far.

JAZZ AS SPRINGING FROM THE CROSSROADS BETWEEN 'AFRICAN' AND 'EUROPEAN'

Treating the stimulation vs. stabilization dialectics of jazz harmony, we have already touched upon the issue of 'African' and 'Western' elements of jazz. This is, of course, an enormous field of study, in which music theory and American history come together in a very intriguing way. Naturally, no attempt can be made here to present a thorough review of existing research. Nor will I contribute a comprehensive account of the field from my own point of view. Still, making references to this historical/musicological/theoretical puzzle is crucial for the empirical placement of our dialectical theory. What I have been treating as the existential here-and-now challenges of improvisation, are of course just as much challenges presented in a specific historical and cultural location, with the burdens and the tools delivered by the past operating as 'flexible constants' defining and laying out the musical situation.

A whole mythology can be traced in the research on jazz history concerning 'African' vs. 'European/White/Western', with respect to the music itself (as if music can ever really be separated from people playing and listening) as well as the sociology and social psychology of its subcultures. Here, *sensuality* is seen as clashing creatively or antagonistic with *intellectuality*, groove with semantic-musical content, 'hot' with 'cool', etc., etc.. The Afro-American traditions of blues and spirituals are seen as sources on the 'African' side, while ragtime, marching bands and to a certain extent (while undoubtedly playing a

very important role on later stages of jazz' development) Western art music, on the 'white' side. The African elements of collective improvisation, modal/static harmony and groove with repetitive patterns and driving poly rhythms were put in a fruitful play of fusion with European ideals of section-based form, harmonic progression, individual virtuosity[2] – and, importantly, of a constant *innovative* praxis in all of these fields.

The process of fusion between the 'African' and the 'European' did not happen once and for all. In addition to taking place historically in the beginning of the previous Century, it always keeps on happening in jazz – or at least in jazz that is alive and breathing. You converse unfolding of form with music as a state of being. You converse harmonic progression with modal landscapes. You converse compositional clarity with groove. One can see the schism between the 'African' and the 'Western' as a theme that must be re-worked dialectically throughout jazz history, and a theme that is also re-worked dialectically in the personal development of musicians. Comparing with the dilemmas presented earlier, the 'African' will correspond to the heat of the *moment*, the *stabilization* in repetition (remember, however, the inherent stimulation-stabilization synthesis in groove), the immediate *gratification* in grooving, the *closeness* and *sameness* in physical-sensual symbiosis with the music. The 'Western', on the other hand, will correspond to conceptualization of trajectories and *duration*, the *stimulation* and *difference* of contrasts and novelty, the tolerated *frustration* involved in deferred gratification, and the *distance* of analysis and comparative listening. I would suggest that improvised music has a very significant potential for *healing* or *uniting* the gap between these clichéd extremes. Jazz – at its best – builds bridges over a schism that is paralyzing post-colonial culture; the strange and seldom very fruitful combination of antagonism, mystification and idealization in the relationship between Occident and Orient. We envy each other, idealize each other, and dislike one another in mostly non-fusion ways. There is a need for healing dialectics. Not in Marxist-like totalitarian revolutionary utopias, but in a responsible, post-modern dialectical way; opening up for the freedom to transcend and sublate dilemmas on a personal level while not forgetting the links to socio-historical processes and to cultural heritage.

Once again, let us turn to the practical level to exemplify this:

UNFOLDING OF FORM VS. MUSIC AS A STATE OF BEING

Charles O. Harman describes the potential for synthesis in form. He talks of the African heritage of 'music as a state of being' vs. the European tradition of *pieces* of music with a beginning, different sections, and an end, and he states that "[t]he standard structure of a small-group jazz performance brings these different ontologies of music to a truce or compromise – ideally, a synthesis" (Hartman 1991:10). The standard convention for jazz performance in small ensembles is: theme presentation (tutti) – a number of soli, each of which in themselves an unfolding with a distinct dramaturgy, and with the possibility of other players entering in to "comment" or back up the improvisation – a second theme presentation, often with a Coda. Thus, we have a form with sub-forms – a complex, yet straight linear, unfolding. But the whole of this unfolding derives its musical intensity – and, ultimately, its meaning and significance – from a groove and a state. You don't necessarily *have to* pay attention to the theme to enjoy the solos, and a brilliant motif connection between parts of the unfolding is really not of much value if the overall musical intensity is not happening (It Don't Mean a Thing If It Ain't Got…). The groove is, if one is forced to choose – which, ideally, one should not – ultimately more important than each section in itself. Furthermore, musicians should be willing to sacrifice any planned scheme or form if a repetitive intensity is developed that is strong enough to

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[2]   The focus on individual, soloist virtuosity is of course also found in much African music, for instance in the "master drummer" function, where a particularly skilled drummer improvise solo cross-rhythms to the ever repeating rhythmic ground laid by the other drummers. Surely, in ensemble work, performers of European art music also experience collectivism and states of being-part-of-a-larger-body-of-music. However, I do think that it is fair to make a distinction between individuality and collectivism as a general emphasis in European art music and African music respectively, as long as we keep in mind that this is an overt over-simplification done for heuristic purposes, not for historical correctness.

'demand' more time. The length in time of each section is more dependent on the intensity developed in this particular section than on a proportion-like relationship to the length of the other sections. Thus, the logic of plans and schemes is coupled with the logic of spontaneity and situation. And so, the most widely used jazz performance idiom is in itself a dialectical solution to the tension between the demand for music as a state of being, and the demand for music as a nuanced unfolding.

TEMPERED VS. NON-TEMPERED UNIVERSES OF SOUND

We can also look at the relationship between well-tempered 'Western' tonality and the use of blue notes in jazz from the point of view of 'African' vs. 'Western' (cf. the remarks made concerning the blue note earlier). When jazz developed in the fuzzy encounter between spirituals, blues, ragtime, marching band traditions and others, a field of tension was simultaneously activated between tonality based on tempered intervals and tonic-subdominant-dominant harmony on the one hand, and modal music with a high tolerance for – indeed, preferences for – subtle nuances in the size of intervals on the other hand. This field of tension is brought into play in the particularities of every instrument and its possibilities and limitations in relation to the tempered system. I do think, in passing, that one could write the whole history of jazz piano as a series of attempts to come to terms with the paradox of playing music that actually requires flexible blue notes on a completely stiff, tempered instrument – a kind of continuing grief process over the lack of blue notes. The different styles, voicing traditions, and approaches on the instrument represent different ways of trying to incorporate the ambiguity of blue notes and their consonance-in-dissonance status without losing what is, after all, the fascinating qualities of the piano compared to the more pitch-flexible instruments.

So, I maintain that the tension between tempered and non-tempered universes of sound is also constitutive to the synthesis of 'African' and 'Western' in jazz (and, subsequently, in most of jazz' children in Western popular music). It is connected to the tension between the subtle flexibility of static harmony (bringing, in successful ritual-like music, *ec*static results), and the richness, yet often the rigid stiffness, of harmonic progression in chord changes. And precisely this tension is dialectically dealt with and *played* with in good jazz. You have harmonic progression *and* you have a modal or bluesy feel.

In closing, I do not think that the implied link between musical synthesis and human liberation in dilemmas between order and openness; logic and ecstasy; direction and cycles; analysis and spontaneity; is at all arbitrary or dangerous. As long as we stick to a non-authoritarian, metaphor-embracing, locally situated dialectical view of history and liberation, I believe this linking can do nothing but inspire us fruitfully.

CONCLUSIONS?

The puzzles of jazz actions are now situated in a broader context, involving even the history of civilization. However briefly carried out, I do think that this excursion offered a very necessary perspective. Nevertheless, our main focus is the challenges for the individual improviser here and now, and the processes in consciousness of the individual improviser here and now. My conception of this has both expanded and integrated itself along the work involved in my thesis, and it always seems to take on another circle when I re-visit the material, as I have done for this little talk. I have tried to provide a bridge between terminology from scenic music theory; the five dialectical themes of Stierlin; and all the practical musicianship touched upon in our exploration of them.

We have to end here, leaving for later the very interesting task of developing further the practical implications of our theory.[3] Still, mind you, most of what we have presented does indeed have the double

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[3] The Norwegian thesis on which this essay is built has a separate section suggesting rehearsal tasks for expanding one's musical consciousness developed from the theory presented.

status of being manifestations of what is actually happening in flowing improvisation on the one hand, and implicit suggestions for practicing improvisation on the other. In this way, I believe we have already outlined a general frame for dialectical practicing of improvisation. To illustrate: One should practice handling the tension between long-term and short-term musical perception. One should practice handling the tension between going with the flow and controlling and directing the music. One should practice being 'inside' the music and listening from 'outside' in an intimate dialogic presence – one should play for oneself as a listener.

Dilemmas are there to be explored and experienced – we have so much to gain from personal development in going for the extremities and going for the intriguing movements of synthesis, while trying to avoid ending up in the boring middle of the road. We should practice giving and receiving, being cool and being hot, being hard and being soft. We should expand our consciousness contemplating the dialectical eroticism of improvisation.

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