

Working Through the New: Consciousness, Embodiment, Gesture, and Intertextuality.

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Although the idea that that which is “new” is also valuable has had a strangle hold over much of the value system of Western culture for several centuries, most vividly seen, perhaps, in two of capitalism’s most scared cows - progress and fashion - it is an idea inhabited by contradictions. It is meaningless without, and dependent upon, “the old”, for instance, yet is used, as a system of values, to sideline and reject that which is old. The old, of course, is also valued - often disproportionately to its use value which, I think, tells us something: where the old is valuable it is usually because it is commodified in terms that make it seem to participate less in the active construction of contemporary culture than the new, often having the status of “the timeless classic”, whereas that which is “new” seems to have an active and participatory role in forming our contemporary culture - though the distinction is, of course, ideological. As *The Devil’s Dictionary* has it, “there is nothing new under the sun, but there are lots of old things we don’t know”. It’s the second half of that quotation that concerns me today - the “lots of old things we don’t know”; do we *really* not know them? have we simply forgotten them? or have they been repressed - in the psychoanalytical sense by social pressures, or in the political sense by historical ones? or again, maybe the old things we don’t know have simply slipped below our noticing through familiarity and a sense of them being “second nature”; habits and reflexes that we no longer notice.

It is still difficult for us to look at “the new” without the ideological and conceptual frames and filters that belong to a historical period which *may not be ours* any longer. Modernity, and its variously defined *modernisms*, seem to have made the idea of “the new” their own, celebrating technological progress, social revolution, cultural innovation,

consumer novelty, and placing “the new” so much centre stage that anything not “new” has tended to be sidelined from many historical accounts of the period. Within our present socio-economic system that, despite credit crunches, the destruction of environments, and global poverty, remains committed to the notion of continual economic growth, innovation is still depended on as one of the key factors servicing such growth - something that is vividly symptomized in the gradual but inexorable shift from “speculative” to “instrumentalized” research in the university. Though there can be little doubt that there are specific aspects of postmodernity and postmodernism - at least as far as cultural activity is concerned - that do differ markedly from specific aspects of what has been labelled as modernity and modernism, there are historically situated roots to our cultural understandings of “the new” that continue to structure and inform those understandings in the present.

In his essay “Psyche: Invention of the Other” Derrida is concerned with the idea of the new, formulated in terms of “invention”. I will briefly sketch out the salient points of the article at this point, but shall be returning to them as the paper proceeds. In Derrida’s analysis one of the key attributes of invention is the imperative that it be

“evaluated, recognized, and legitimized by someone else, by an other . . . as member of a social community . . . an invention can never be *private* once its status as invention, let us say its patent or warrant, its manifest, open, public identification, has to be certified and conferred” (pp. 4-5).

Invention is thus always actuated in relation to a social and cultural “other” that, in effect, countersigns it. Invention, then, can never be just the work of one individual.

. . . the event of an invention, its act of inaugural production, once recognized, legitimized, countersigned by a social consensus according to a system of conventions, must be valid *for the future* (p. 6).

This locates the status of an invention *as* invention in relation to its future - to its validation “after the event”, as it were. Invention, though, in being taken up into a culture also immediately acquires a historical status:

It will only receive its status of invention, furthermore, to the extent that this socialization of the invented thing is protected by a system of conventions that will at the same time ensure its inscription in a common *history*, its *belonging to a culture*: to a heritage, a patrimony, a pedagogical tradition, a discipline, a chain of generations” (p. 6 - some emphases added)

But Derrida also draws attention to a crucial ambiguity in the original meaning of “invention”, which has been undermined in the post-Renaissance. Invention carried the sense not only of something made for the first time (its familiar modern meaning), but also of something unveiled, uncovered - literally something “come upon”, from the latin verb *venire*, to come, and the prefix *in-*. The logical supposition is that in order to be discovered, something invented - something “new” - must have been, in a sense, already there. We can say, then, that “invention” is multiply positioned with respect to its past *and* its future, its advent *and* its futurity, and that these temporal relations are - characteristically of Derrida - not causally related in terms of origin and consequence in any direct linear fashion.

If “invention”, then, is one of the possible modalities for “the new”, something can be an invention - can be new - only insofar as it has a past *and* a future; a past that can be constructed as an advent to its appearance - this advent might attract the name “history”, under certain conditions - and a future that is a function of its having been socio-culturally sanctioned *as* invention; something that *was* invented, and has been taken up into a culture.

Webern’s “The Path to the New Music”

Many of the themes in “The Path to the New Music”, a series of eight lectures given by Anton Webern in 1932-1933, make strange reading for us today. Though psychoanalytical literary theorists such as Shoshana Felman, Maud Ellman, and Jacques Lacan warn against attempting to psychoanalyse the *writer* of a text on the basis of that text, Webern’s almost obsessive insistence on the “naturalness” of the emergence of serialism from functional tonality does make us wonder if something is being repressed.

“. . . the things treated by art in general, . . . are not ‘aesthetic’, but . . . a matter of natural laws . . .” (Webern, p. 11).

“. . . music is natural law as related to the sense of hearing” (Webern, p. 11).

“. . . one must approach [great works of art] . . . in the same way one has to approach works of nature; with the necessary awe at the secrets they are based on, at the mystery they contain” (Webern, p. 11).

Webern claims to demonstrate how Western triadic harmony, and the diatonic scale, arise from the natural overtone series, claiming forcibly that “. . . as a material it accords completely with nature” (Webern, p. 13)

As a claim for literal truth the proof offered is blatant nonsense, and his logic gets even riskier as he implies that there is a historically *necessary* process by which musical material becomes ever more distanced from triadic harmony as the more acoustically complex parts of the overtone series are explored. Dissonances, and eventually microtonality, are, for Webern, “contained within the notes that nature provides” (Webern, p. 16); the emergence of dissonance, atonality, and microtonality are thus simply a measure of the deepening, progressive knowledge of the natural overtones, and implicitly, then, of the penetration by Man [sic] of Nature itself.

However, although the *literal* claims to truth that Webern makes here do not really stand up to much careful scrutiny, there is, nevertheless, a strong resonance with the idea of

“invention” as “discovery”. As metaphor - rather than literal truth - Webern’s insistent invocations of “the natural”, outline a narrative of scientific discovery that contrasts significantly with the usual, mid-twentieth-century history of The Great Composers (though there’s plenty of this in “The Path to the New Music” too).

“. . . just as a researcher into nature strives to discover the rules of order that are the basis of nature, we must strive to discover the laws according to which nature, in its particular form ‘man’, is productive” (Webern, p. 11).

For Webern, then, “the new” is immanent in the already existent, revealed through an inescapable evolutionary destiny. In this we find a reappearance of the idea that “the new” is something waiting there to be discovered, an idea that had been sidelined, just as its sense in the word “invention” had been sidelined from the seventeenth century. In 1532, Webern’s assertion that “. . . the diatonic scale wasn’t invented, it was discovered” (Webern, p. 15), might not make quite the sense it did in 1932.

It is no coincidence that the modern meaning of invention - and of the new - as something humanly constructed, rather than found, emerges in or around the seventeenth century when the notion of authorship in its modern sense was (arguably) also emerging, and when scriptural accounts of the world were being superseded by secular, scientific ones. Prior to this historical moment the world had been made by a creator-God, but God had not manifest Creation in its totality, and one of Man’s roles, therefore, was to reveal this totality. The dual notion of invention makes perfect sense here - Man does not “create”, but “unveils, reveals, comes upon”. However, this notion that nothing can be absolutely new because God has already created everything in the world, begins to shift, from the seventeenth century, towards the modern, enlightenment world view that increasingly puts man - rather than God - at the centre of things.

Where Derrida traces a shift in the meaning of “invention” at this historical moment away from the uncovering of an essentially complete, divine Creation, so Raymond Williams identifies a change in the meaning of the word “creative”. Prior to the Renaissance,

humans did not “create”, as such, only God did. As St. Augustine (apparently) put it, “creatura non potest creare” - “the creature - that has been created - cannot itself create”.

As Williams writes,

“. . . the extension of the word to indicate present or future making - that is to say a kind of making by men [sic] - is part of the major transformation of thought which we now describe as the humanism of the Renaissance” (Williams, *Keywords*, p. 82).

The original configurations of meanings of invention separate, the sense of coming upon the already existent transfers itself into imperial activities and the exploitation of natural resources, and the idea of invention grounded in discovery and revelation is replaced by a notion of invention that results from an individual, human, genius, who takes all the credit. Similarly “creativity” follows this anthropocentric ideological drift. This occurs alongside the emergent concept of authorship, and its claim to intellectual property rights, claims that would of course be more difficult to ground if that property was, in a sense, already there for the finding (though this is, of course, a complicated example, given the history of colonialism and the current copyrighting of biological matter, but this is probably not the place to explore the nuances of that particular argument).

Lawrence Kramer, amongst others, has pointed out the connection of the idea of “originality” with the emergence of “commodification”; “genius” is very much a mercantile phenomenon, closely related to the rise of capitalism and ideas of intellectual property, authorship, and the commercial value of the author’s productions. The idea of “the new” *qua* product is fundamentally grounded in the value systems of individual authorship, the personal ego, and intellectual property rights constituted through bourgeois culture. The refusal of repetition (rather than reproduction), and the insistence on technical and aesthetic innovation as the measure of musico-cultural worth, has been, and in many respects still is, an unchallenged fundamental in the general value system of the arts. Whether concealed behind the mask of modernist “artistic necessity”, or Webern’s quasi-biological teleology, or more explicitly displayed in popular culture’s latest “new thing”, “the new”, figured in terms of originality, accrues cultural value.

That this “new” is dependent upon the repression of the old is evident in popular culture from at least the 1920s, and the so-called “Jazz Age”, but reaches a kind of zero point in art music in the period immediately after the Second World War. Works such as Boulez’s *Structures Ia*, Cage’s *4’33”*, and Schaeffer’s *Cinq Etudes de Bruit* seem to be striving to, in a sense, “reinvent” what music might be. They have certainly been represented as such in sufficient musicological accounts for such a view to have acquired a certain cultural gravity. A scholar with the in-depth cultural critique of Adorno remained vividly aware of the necessity of working with inherited materials, and sceptical of these most radical experiments to reject inherited language. Nevertheless these musics that are exceptionally rarely played or listened to remain enduring presences in histories of twentieth-century music, suggesting that regardless of their material cultural worth, their extreme “newness” is still somehow valuable. Work that so thoroughly approaches the idealised “new” as these continue to be valued even though they are no longer very “new” at all.

Searching for the new

John Cage rejected musical free improvisation because he saw it as a site of human expressivity, personality, and learned or remembered material. At particular moments in his career, the only guarantee of “the new” for Cage was, effectively, to set up control systems that should effectively prevent - legislate against, if you like - any culturally determined musical structures or occurrences. Cage, in common with many modernists, makes claims for his version of “the new” that distances it from what might be thought of as “the cultural”, which is figured in terms of that which is pre-existent or learned.

Although Webern seems, on the surface of things, to hold to a less apparently radical idea of “the new” - situating the new in relation to a noble and ever-progressing cultural tradition - beneath the surface - in the unconscious of his writing, as it were - we can find symptoms that suggests a polarisation of his idea of “the new” *away from the cultural* through his strong reliance on figuring “the new music” as *natural* - traditionally figured in opposition to the cultural.

We can find this rejection of “the cultural” in favour of “the natural” associated with several of the discourses of “the new” from the second half of the twentieth century. The theatre director Jerzy Grotowski, for example, rejects a form of actor’s training that relies on that which is culturally “learned” in favour of a specialized conception of the training of the actor that leads them to develop a sense of *physical intelligence*. Grotowski’s

“main principle is . . . react - react with the body”.¹ “. . . Bodily activity comes first, and then vocal expression . . . First you bang on the table and afterwards you shout!”,² “. . . thought must be excluded. The pupils are to speak the text without thinking.³ . . . If you think, you must think with your body You must think with the whole body by means of actions”.⁴

Here thinking is associated with that which is already known - the cultural. Grotowski’s new approach is to teach the actor to rely on their body - to think with their body. The body comes first - literally in the case where the actor has to bang on the table and shout - and this unthinking body is a site of instinctual and uncompromised authenticity. The idea that thought is somehow more cultural than action - at least some forms of action - and is thus an obstacle to originality is a strong trope in the second half of the twentieth century. Grotowski writes

“We are not after recipes, the stereotypes which are the prerogative of professionals . . . one must ask the actor: ‘What are the obstacles blocking you on your way towards the total act which must engage all your psycho-physical resources, from the most instinctive to the most rational?’”.⁵

¹ Marijnen, “Actor’s Training (1966)”, p. 185.

² Marijnen, “Actor’s Training (1966)”, p. 183.

³ Marijnen, “Actor’s Training (1966)”, p. 176.

⁴ Marijnen, “Actor’s Training (1966)”, p. 204.

⁵ Grotowski, “Actor’s Technique”, p. 209.

Much of this elimination of blockages is to be attained by putting the mind, and thinking - figured here as something done with the conscious brain - into abeyance. Close in spirit, if not praxis, Stockhausen writes that

“[t]he most profound moments in musical interpretation and composition are those which are not the result of mental processes, are not derived from what we already know, nor are they simply deducible from what has happened in the past”.

As with Grotowski, thinking, for Stockhausen, is an obstacle to the state of consciousness required by his “Intuitive Music”; he writes that “acting, or listening, or doing something *without thinking* is the state of pure intuitive activity, not requiring to use the brain as a control”.⁶

In free improvisation, which emerged at roughly the same time, one critical strategy against the allegations that “anyone could do that” has been to neutralize the criticism at source by figuring improvisation as something that requires no culturally pre-validated skill or ability. Alan Durant, for example, writes that for “quite a number of contemporary improvisers . . . improvisation is a human activity which gains value exactly from the fact that it constructs . . . no ensnaring conventions or intrinsically detrimental value judgements; it frees the human from the social” (Durant, p. 270). For Derek Bailey improvisation is “a *natural part* of being a performing musician”,⁷ it is “a basic instinct, an essential force in sustaining life”⁸ and is thus imagined in terms that situate it outside of what might be thought of as the cultural; Bailey writes that

“[t]ransient musical fashion . . . is unlikely to have any effect on something as fundamental as the nature of improvisation”,⁹ “as regards method, the improviser employs the oldest in music-making. . . . it pre-

⁶ *Stockhausen on Music*, p. 124 *needs refs!!! (emphasis added)*

⁷ Bailey, *Improvisation*, p. 142 [emphases added].

⁸ Bailey, *Improvisation*, p. 140.

⁹ Bailey, *Improvisation*, p. xiii.

dates any other music - mankind's first musical performance couldn't have been anything other than a free improvisation".¹⁰

In predating any other music, improv is positioned, logically, as proto- if not pre-cultural. We can see a pattern emerging: the "new", for Webern, Grotowski, Stockhausen, and Bailey, is manifest - at least in part - by a recourse to "the natural", which is figured as prior to or external to that which is considered "cultural". For Webern, music which continued to deploy "conventional" tonal materials, and which rejected the dodecaphonic imperative, was either out of date, or merely fashionable - either historically out of place, or simply a commodity - which would situate such musics only in the cultural, insofar as they reject the "natural" tendencies of musical material. For all four "the cultural" is marked by "thinking" and "memory", against which they appeal to an instinctive, ancient, and fundamental "natural" that has been lost: Nature and the body, in their arguments, come before Culture and the mind.

Derrida

But if these figurations of the new seem to resonate with that repressed meaning of invention that Derrida uncovers in his essay, there is nevertheless a problem in deploying deconstruction to discuss this recourse to precedents. Derrida writes:

"The enterprise of returning 'strategically', 'ideally', to an origin or to a priority thought to be simple, intact, normal, pure, standard, self-identical, in order then to think in terms of derivation, complication, deterioration, accident, etc. . . . is not just one metaphysical gesture among others, it is the metaphysical exigency, that which has been the most constant, most profound and most potent" (Literature Inc., p. 236).

The "most potent" of the metaphysical consequences of binaristic thinking is the notion that the dominant side of the binarism is originary, *ex nihilo*, ideal and pure, temporally and epistemologically preceding the subordinate side, which is figured as either

¹⁰ Bailey, *Improvisation*, p. 83

derivative, or in terms of a degeneration or a fall. The expulsion from Eden is thus a paradigm case for Western culture, and in their different particular articulations Webern, Cage, Grotowski, Stockhausen and Bailey all play to this agenda. What counts is the originary, the *ex nihilo*, the unprecedented, that which “has not been said”, as Webern puts it, that which is not already known, not thought about, not part of culture (yet) because it has arisen spontaneously - naturally, as it were.

For Derrida alogous binarisms structure “the metaphysics of presence”, which presupposes that there is thought - primary and originary - which precedes language, and which is then put into language and communicated. Speech seems, to the speaker who hears themselves speak, to be coterminous with thought, and thus appears closer to the presence of the thought than writing does, which merely transcribes speech. However, no matter how much speech might be claimed to be closer to the truth of thought than writing in the name of a “metaphysics of presence”, speech is no less structured by language than writing is; however close to an originary “truth” it might imagine itself to be, such a truth cannot, for Derrida, come before its articulation. As Jonathan Culler puts it:

“A word’s meaning within the system of a language . . . is a result of the meaning speakers have given it in past acts of communication. . . . the structure of a language, its system of norms and regularities, is . . . the result of prior speech acts. However, when we take this argument seriously and . . . look at the events which are said to determine structures, we find that every event is . . . already determined and made possible by prior structures. The possibility of meaning something by an utterance is already inscribed in the structure of the language. . . . however far back we try to push, even when we try to imagine the “birth” of language . . . we discover that we must assume prior organisation, prior differentiation” (Culler, *On Deconstruction*, pp. 95-96).

Derrida, however, is not the only one to hope for the dissolution of the binaristic logic which has imposed (often unconscious) limits on Western thought and action. Recent theories of consciousness have not been content to reduce the body to Nature - or to its scientific avatar, biology - and leave Culture to the mind. Just as Derrida's deconstruction is not content merely to reverse the terms of a binarism, but to critically dissolve the binaristic ground upon which the metaphysics of presence stands, Gibson's "environmental consciousness" and Varela's "enactive cognition" fundamentally problematize the notion of binaristic thinking, in particular that body and mind are separable paradigms, and that an embodied consciousness can be separated from the environment in which it exists.

As Wayne Bowman puts it, "the *body is in the mind*. Mind is rendered possible by bodily sensations and actions, from whose patterns it emerges At the same time, the *mind is in the body*, in the sense that mind is coextensive with the body's neural pathways and the cognitive templates they comprise".¹¹

Francesco J. Varela questions the idea that human consciousness is something that is only located in the mind. Our senses are not passive receptors of a world that "has" "particular properties, such as length, color, movement, sound, etc." but are actively directed to the construction of a world of which they themselves are a part. Sight reaches out into the world, structuring it according to a complex and ever-changing web that includes physiological response, memory, chance, and past experience. We experience the world by doing;

"cognition is not the representation of a pregiven world by a pregiven mind but is rather the enactment of a world *and a mind* on the basis of a history of the variety of actions that a being in the world performs".¹²

¹¹ Borgo, p. 42, citing Bowman, Wayne, "Cognition and the Body: Perspectives from Music Education", in Bresler, Liora (ed.), *Knowing Bodies, Moving Minds: Towards Embodied Teaching and Learning (Place of publication not known!!!:Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2004)*, p. 36)

¹² Varela et al, p, 9

If consciousness is enactive - something we do, rather than something we have - then we do this within the physiological limits of our possible actions. However, what distinguishes Varela's understanding of consciousness from many of the "scientific" inquiries carried out under the heading of "cognitive science" is a recognition that the limits to an enactive consciousness are not only physiological but also cultural.

When I use the violin in free improvisation - ostensibly with the aims of spontaneity and creativity - what I do passes through, and is formed by, internalized cultural filters of sonority, history, learning, expectation, listening, watching, and acting. I have often tried to understand my improvising in terms of "intuitive" physical reactions to the sonic gestures coming from my fellow improvisers, in part because this is a convenient received and culturally-validated alibi that situates such a practice as "new". In attempting to think this through, I have imagined my violin like a scientific device, something on which these "natural" and "instinctive" reactions can be registered in musical terms, a seismograph of my inner state, or even a lie detector.

However, the neutrality that such ideas attribute to the violin is delusional - indeed, ideological. The violin is not - and can never be - a neutral measuring device, neither can the sound it makes be heard as simply a direct sonification of human gesture; both the instrument itself, and the sounds it makes, are saturated with cultural meanings. From the point of view of enactive consciousness, the violin is not simply a physical object with finite properties but something that is only fully constituted *as* a violin in its inter-relationship to my culturally-situated bodily consciousness; my ears, my cultural conditioning, my memory, and my right forearm are as much a part of the violin bow as the wood and horse hair are.¹³

¹³ "Every single individual who raises himself out of his natural being to the spiritual finds in the language, customs, and institutions of his people a pre-given body of material which, as in learning to speak, he has to make his own. . . . the world into which he is growing is one that is humanly constituted through language and custom" (Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, p. 13). *needs full refs as first citation*

Improvisation, then, is not originary at all, can not produce anything “new” in that sense, but represents a play across memory, history, embodiment, and a culturally-situated, enactive consciousness - it is something I *do* “on the basis of a history”, as Varela says, of things I have already done, felt, heard, and seen. The conditions of possibility of improvisation are built from palimpsests of what music *already is* or *has been* for any particular improviser. Enactive consciousness, insofar as it refuses the separation of the mind from the body, or the self from its material or cultural environment, demands that these palimpsests must be therefore be both multisensory and distributed. This means that such palimpsests are not simply accretions of “texts”, as a classic postmodern materialism might avow, but are also constituted by embodied actions that cannot, I suggest, be usefully reduced to the status of texts; if consciousness is a function of mind, body, and environment, if it is present and at work in the brain, the finger, the ear, the memory, and in the broader cultural environment, it seems worth investigating how this might impact on our understanding of how our culture “works”.

Alan Durant, writing about free improvisation, has observed how our bodies *and* our personal histories might be understood as a “psychical ‘notation’ or ‘score’”,¹⁴ that music is, in a sense, already inscribed within us as we improvise. On the face of it this would tend to ally Durant’s observations with the concept of music as thing rather than action. There is, however, also a resonance with Culler’s interpretation of Derrida cited earlier, that “however far back we try to push . . . we must assume prior organisation, prior differentiation”; whether we are improvising music or striving for some metaphysical truth, that pristine, *ex nihilo*, unprecedented origin is always outside of our grasp, always already a derivative.

Thinking through Varela’s enactive consciousness with Derrida’s deconstruction of binarisms leads me to a moment of a kind of liberatory impasse; to an *ontological condition* of “Music” that is somehow just “there”, waiting to be uncovered, an ontological condition that sets up the possibility of something - an improvisation, for example, or indeed any instance of musical creativity - to *be* music. Though it would be

¹⁴ (Durant, in Norris, p. 273)

irresponsible to claim that enactive consciousness and intertextuality are interchangeable, I *am* going to propose that they can be understood as naming and accounting for, at different conceptual registers, models of “the new” - and the *possibility* of “the new” - that are critical of modernist claims that have sought to distinguish “the new” from “the cultural”. To think of creativity as a site where texts of all sorts coincide together with actions through the embodied and enactive consciousness of the improviser is to unseat it from its privileged and humanistic claims to presence or origins, and to return it to its “proper place”, as a collective cultural practice that effaces the boundaries of text and action in a creative act of uncovering.

“O chestnut-tree, great-rooted blossomer,
Are you the leaf, the blossom or the bole?
O body swayed to music, O brightening glance,
How can we know the dancer from the dance?”¹⁵

Separating the dancer from the dance has been, arguably, one of the key structuring projects of modern Western epistemology, with the overdetermination of the product over the process repeated at differing philosophical and cultural registers. One of the main obstacles in bringing enactive consciousness together with intertextuality has been the foregrounding of the idea of text in the latter. Though text can be flexibly and inclusively formulated, there nevertheless remains a tough kernel that presents texts as “things” in the theory. Though we might think of a dancing body working through a choreography as embodying, performing, or actualising the “text” that is *the dance*, there is still strongly implicit the idea that there is a “dance” - understood as a form of text - that is not exceeded by the dancing of it.

In much poststructuralist thought we find ourselves represented or understood as being subject to and constituted by the social texts that precede and exceed our individual existences, and while this can serve as a productive way to approach the undeniable

¹⁵ W. B. Yeats, “Among School Children”.

actuality of ourselves as socially constructed beings, it throws up more problematic issues when we try to imagine, or account for, our subjective sense of agency *within* such social texts. It's not something I do these days, but when I did dance at clubs I experienced a strong sense of being part of a collective, at the same time that I was also performing my own internal experience - not unlike the experience of improvising, in fact. Though the moves I would be making might well appear to be very similar to those everyone else was making, I nevertheless had the strong sense that they were also *my* moves which I experienced not as "dances" but as "dancing". Crucially, I think, this is down to the embodied experiencing of music, and to an understanding of the body that fully includes it in cultural experience.

Several of the stronger threads in recent critique have been directed at marginalising the body, as such. We are told that our culture is "post-corporeal", for instance, that we are "past" the body. Varela and Small, in their very different ways, present a body that is active, and - crucially - participative; it has agency. This implies a move away from Foucault's earlier, influential theorisation of the body as nothing more than a largely passive "site" that is "inscribed" by law and culture. Not surprisingly, Foucault has been consistently criticised for denying - or at least failing to account for - the possibility of subjective human agency.

If, as a culture, we've tended to be more interested in dances than dancers, some recent thinking has started to chip away at this. Christopher Small has challenged the Western cultural bias towards the product with his notion of musicking, in which he seeks to remind us that music is not an abstract and reified "thing" but an active process, whether of listening, playing it, dancing to it, or composing it. Like Varela's understanding of consciousness, Small sees music not as something we have, but as something we do.

Many recent critics have seen DJ-ing as a sort of paradigm case of intertextuality and the concomitant deconstruction of authorship. Though there is much to be gained by interrogating the practice in these terms, as a paradigm of DJ-ing it is an over simplistic rationalisation. A DJ does not only "know" the music they play from listening, but also

from moving to it, seeing others move to it, seeing and hearing other DJs performing with it, and “feeling” what each particular record *does* when it is scratched, or mixed with, or cut into other records.

Hans-Georg Gadamer has talked of Understanding in not dissimilar terms - Understanding must include a cognitive, a practical, and a social dimension. The cognitive dimension is concerned with understanding in the intellectual sense, but this is inseparable from a practical understanding, in the sense that we can understand water by drinking it, or swimming in it. The social dimension that completes the constellation of understanding is grounded in the notion of “agreement”; that for Understanding to be possible there needs to be socio-cultural “agreement” - something I see as closely related to Derrida’s notion, mentioned earlier, of the countersigning of invention by a culture, its being taken up into a history.

The DJ’s knowledge of “the music” thus includes an embodied *doing* that is negotiated within a specific cultural positioning and cannot be simply reduced to a collection of texts. Eli During has criticised those theorists who were too ready to see DJ practice in terms of a cultural underclass resisting the hegemony of the commodity, and has proposed what is probably a more accurate picture of DJ culture in which creative humans make music with what is ready to hand for the purpose; in a culture dominated by recording, records are just as suitable for making music with as “instruments” are.

Such a view shifts the emphasis of how we might read what a DJ does away from the “text” - as something we can have - and onto the enactive consciousness of the DJ at work - to the “doing” of DJ practice; musicking not music. The DJ intervenes in the records with his or her body, incorporating them into the body and remediating them out of the body, actualising the music as flow not object, transforming recordings from things into actions - from “music” to “musicking” - in the process. Creative decisions are made as much according to “feel” as they are according to other cognitive criteria, and the body is a participant in the musical decision making process, not just a “site” across which the “music” is played out.

[The final part of this presentation involved me looking into some videos of air guitar and lipsynching culled from YouTube, which I am trying to find ways of adequately representing for this website - to be continued.....!]