

Spatial Aesthetics of Contemporary Music and Urban Culture

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<sup>1</sup> Cooper-Moore, *Deep in the Neighborhood of History and Influence*. Hopscotch Records, HOP05-CD.

## I. Abstract.

This paper on consumer culture, avant-garde jazz/electronic music, and continental thought gets right to the heart of what making music is about in an urban metropolis. City landscapes create noise, as do processed instrumentals and live vocals. What I intend to do in this paper is barrage the reader with a healthy dose of what musical life is like in a big city. If I can get through to the reader the internalization necessary to understand free-form sounds, then my paper will have served as a proactive user's guide to avant-garde music and culture in contemporary society.

The Neo-Kantian philosophy dominant in academic institutions on the European Continent during the turn of the twentieth century, especially the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl and the social theory of Georg Simmel and Emile Durkheim, will be employed to understand certain American musicians' outlook and engagement with the "concept" of space, as documented by the artistic production of urban New York's "illbient" subculture during the 1990s. The avant-garde jazz drummer William Hooker's collaboration with DJ Olive on "Archetypal Space", from his album *Mindfulness*, will be used as a case example. The critical social theory of Theodor W. Adorno, and his aesthetics of new music from the mid-twentieth century's Frankfurt School, will be contrasted with Husserlian and Heideggerian phenomenological approaches to making sense of alto saxophonist Ornette Coleman's 1960s album *Free Jazz*, one such an album that accompanied the atonal turn in contemporary American jazz music during the time period. One other founding figure of American avant-garde jazz, pianist Cecil Taylor, will be examined through the lenses of nineteenth-century continental aestheticians of music Friedrich Nietzsche and Arthur Schopenhauer. Another case example will be

Cecil Taylor's 1970s album *Dark To Themselves*, recorded in Ljubljana with David S. Ware on tenor saxophone. I find that since the market for such musical free improvisation is transcontinental, that alone justifies the very attempt to understand the twentieth-century American subculture of avant-garde jazz through the dual set of lenses of nineteenth and twentieth century continental aesthetic theory and social thought.

II. Dedication.

For Spencer E. Cahill: *G. Stein-- "They are all a lost generation"*

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### III. Recent music production shifts in perspective.

Urban aesthetics and ideals exist throughout all sectors of music production and performance. The quality control of commercial music is the pending question of the next five to ten years in the music industry. The industrialization of music is a dynamic process undergoing rapid change in an interconnected world. The process of composing, producing, distributing, and consuming music in the twentieth century symbolized the emergence of a "modern" capitalist regime<sup>2</sup>. As of the moments, mega-media companies face disintegration into disparate genres of sounds. Music executives were originally bred from the cultural climate of such a regime, and enforced an industrialization process that brought varying degrees of original artistic product to the marketplace. The end user- the consumer- in theory should have been empowered by its strategic market position amongst the myriad creatively crafted consumption options, yet the Frankfurt School's critical theorists<sup>3</sup> were in fact directly questioning this sense of empowerment when they equated the most frequently consumed American and European artistic products with banality.

American jazz culture developed at an especially fast rate during the time the Frankfurt School's first started to become influential in academia. In this era the jazz genre was not the profit center of the music industry, and therefore its musicians were

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<sup>2</sup> Social philosopher Karl Marx critiqued a breed of capitalism which was in fact pre-modern, hence the term classical political economy that historians of economic thought usually equate with Adam Smith, David Ricardo, and Karl Marx.

<sup>3</sup> The Institute for Social Research at the University of Frankfurt in Germany was founded in 1923 and was subsequently led by the philosopher Max Horkheimer. The academic institute was interdisciplinary in scope, and its prominent members included the literary critic Walter Benjamin, the Heideggerian trained political philosopher Herbert Marcuse, the psychoanalyst Erich Fromm, and the musicologist Theodor Adorno. The two commonalities of these scholars were their Jewish heritage and their critical stance towards capitalism. With the rise of National Socialism in Germany, all of these men except for Walter Benjamin sought asylum in America, and to some degree found there a fresh audience who wanted reform in the high-capitalist system.

able to maintain an independent stance throughout the entire creative process of crafting an original product. During the 1990s electronic music and DJ culture progressed at a rapid rate under a movement called “electronica” or “techno”. The spirit of the originality of jazz had rebirth in a new electronic form where previous recordings were morphed in a new product. The social philosophers and critical theorists of the Frankfurt School have continued relevance in analyzing whether this is true originality or an evolution of industrialization in a “modern”<sup>4</sup> world. Their critical accounts of capitalism bear consideration of “kitsch”<sup>5</sup> in this aesthetic production process. Is the engine of originality the capitalist pursuit of a marketable end product, or the industrial process itself? The “golden era of jazz”<sup>6</sup> brought forth new concepts such as improvisational statements that heavily relied on the original products of previous musicians. This form of “sampling”<sup>7</sup> has many similar characteristics to contemporary electronic music composition. Considering both forms of music, would the early to mid-twentieth century Frankfurt School social philosophers and critical theorists see this type of mimicking as a homogenized low in the form of “mass culture”?

“Originality” in the cultural sphere can be thought of as age-old oak in danger of widespread deforestation by the production-driven market. Cultural critic Walter Benjamin, in his seminal “The Work of Art of in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” (reprinted in *Illumination*, 1968) can be re-interpreted as describing a process in which the “aura” associated with an original work of art losses its prestige, in an

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<sup>4</sup> Many theorists, such as Jean Baudrillard, would dispute the reign of modernity, and have published that we are products of a multiple decade-old “postmodern” world. Commentator Sarah Thornton (1996) references Jean Baudrillard’s *The Ecstasy of Communication* in effort to provide cultural relevance.

<sup>5</sup> Sacred, original art that becomes mass, junk art (inspired by Clement Greenberg, 1971)

<sup>6</sup> Jazz legend Sonny Rollins has described this era as occurring from 1930-1950.

<sup>7</sup> Using other agents output, possibly in effort to create a new product.

unsympathetically "stripped" fashion, at the expense of market initiated technological devices. *Kitsch*, or junk art, involves a crossing of sociology of consumer culture and continental aesthetics, and these critical interdisciplinary pursuits have certain methods of approach that make the early Frankfurt School theory of aura viable. In fact, Walter Benjamin and the Frankfurt School were making critical commentary of a "low-brow"<sup>8</sup> cultural practice that entailed the mass consumption of corporate propagated pieces of "replicated" art. This art was "auratic" in its original state of nature, just as Thomas Hobbes wrote in *Leviathan* that man was "chaotic" in his original state of nature<sup>9</sup>, yet when cheaply mass produced into ten-cent postcards and five-dollar prints, legendary artists' masterpieces were indeed butchered.

The Frankfurt School's critical theorists were astounded by the development of this type of "mass society", one that sunk to a new barbaric low to consume such cultural commodities. We find a similar crisis in early twenty-first century music, with a great divide between instrumentalists who perform "live" and electronic musicians who heavily rely on replication and sampling of these instrumentalists in order to arrive at their final product—which in fact is very much like Walter Benjamin's process of "mechanical reproduction". Nonetheless, the Frankfurt School's critical inquiry into the state of the mid-twentieth century work of art under a capitalist regime will serve as a strong indicator of the direction of early twenty-first century music - independent of the degree it is proliferated by a more stringent form of "hypercapitalism"<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>8</sup> In the sense the French public intellectual Pierre Bourdieu uses the phrase to symbolize class in *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgment of Taste* (1984)

<sup>9</sup> Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* (1982). New York, NY: Penguin Books.

<sup>10</sup> Jean Baudrillard theorizes about "hyperreality" in a postmodern world—"hypercapitalism" is a phrase I have coined that is inspired by Baudrillard (the key concepts to my phrase are acceleration and stringency).



In contemporary music, instrumentalists who considered themselves jazz artists spend a majority of their time performing improvisationally-rich music. Such acts of performativity entail that each jazz set is indeed unique in the sense of a sacred Benjaminian work of art. When these series of improvisations are recorded and mass distributed by corporate record labels, the Frankfurt School's "diminished-prestige" theory applied from aesthetics to music appears weak<sup>11</sup>. However, there is a dilemma that occurs when electronic music producers and disc-jockeys take these indigenous sounds out of their original context and use them as aids in crafting new, "supermodified"<sup>12</sup> sounds. These new sounds have been referred to as "electronica" or "techno". At their core they incorporate Frenchman Claude Levi-Strauss' cultural concept of "bricolage"<sup>13</sup>- making something new out of given materials- rather than the traditional German strain of critical theory. This means that DJ culture may very well be based on an entirely different aesthetic theory than jazz culture, making a comparative cultural study ever-difficult to carry out.

Nonetheless, if we isolate the French DJ aesthetic we find that one of the quintessential *bricoleurs*<sup>14</sup> of the electronic music scene is conceptual artist Paul D. Miller, a.k.a. DJ Spooky That Subliminal Kid. "Give me two turntables, and I'll make you a universe" proclaims Paul D. Miller in *Rhythm Science* (2000, unnumbered page),

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<sup>11</sup> A sixty minute recording of John Coltrane at the Village Vanguard in November of 1961 may have all the original characteristics intact today -- and the consumer may be able to enjoy the recording equally as much as if he would have been in the audience 45 years ago. Ethnomusicologist David Borgo (2002) though, cites the spatiotemporal aspect of performance, and such dimensions could prove for a strong counterargument. Either way, a piece of art can be an entirely different situation (as in the case of Walter Benjamin's critique), because there is not a limit to how a graphic artist can take the visual arts out of their context.

<sup>12</sup> Amon Tobin, *Supermodified* (2000). Ninja Tune: London and Montreal. In this case, the disc-jockey has now become the tonal graphic artist, taking everything out of context- cropping one sound, enhancing another, etc.

<sup>13</sup> Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (1966: University of Chicago Press)

<sup>14</sup> One that performs bricolage; a handy man. "The bricoleur may not ever complete his purpose but he always puts something of himself into it" (Claude Levi-Strauss 1966; Amon Tobin 1997)

and approaching music with such an inventive spirit mirrors much of the pioneering improvisation done by jazz instrumentalists of yesterday. The paradox that emerges is that the music produced in such an innovative process is in fact tacky (in a futuristic sense) sounding (hence the name “techno”), and can in fact be a "low-brow" commodity very much the way we would consider kitsch to be in the visual arts. The archetypal "club"<sup>15</sup> DJ's artistic methods are noble, yet his musical output may be utter trash.

In determining whether DJ culture's product suffers in comparison to a jazz culture (which places extreme emphasis on the technical merits of the artist) it may help to examine what the Frankfurt School thought actually “being authentic<sup>16</sup>” meant. The Frankfurt School's perspective is only one of many variants of cultural critique, yet Institute affiliate Walter Benjamin wrote about a proto-simulation that makes the Institute's literature quite relevant to postmodern DJ culture. "Aura" was a concept that was coined by cultural critic Walter Benjamin in 1936 well before social philosophers Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer had published on "The Culture Industry" in 1944. Although the two concepts complement one another, "aura" clearly involves more activity on behalf of the modern consumer (since it is the market, and consumers' actions, that fetishize the "aura" of art and drive up its economic value). A clear description of the situation is that, ““original works of art, such as paintings, gained much of their prestige from the fact they were usually produced in editions of one...aura” (Ward 2003, pg. 82). Glenn Ward is right by describing "aura" as unnecessary. The great classical political economists that preceded social philosopher Karl Marx wrote about successful ways of efficiently allocating scarce goods. Walter Benjamin's fetishizing "aura" may

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<sup>15</sup> Sarah Thornton, *Club Cultures: Music, Media, and Subcultural Capital* (1996) Wesleyan University Press. Typical night club music in the US and Europe - during the 1990s and 2000s - has been techno.

<sup>16</sup> Charles Guignon has a relevant short book entitled *On Being Authentic* (2004). London, UK: Routledge.

have been a predecessor to the 1990s “irrational exuberance<sup>17</sup>”. However, there is still something very romantic about aura (as opposed to kitsch), hence the reasoning behind its extreme valorization (the assigning of such a high price tag to the one-of-a-kind piece of art).

In order to locate an original element within either DJ or jazz culture, it is necessary to redirect agency from the end user back to music mediated art. When the musician has incentive to act out and generate artistic product, we then have a wellspring of cultural material which to analyze and consume discriminately. As far as traditional art is stimulated, Walter Benjamin writes in “The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction,” that “The authenticity of a thing is the essence of all that is transmissible from its beginning, ranging from its substantive duration to its testimony to the history which it has experienced.” (Richter, 1998, pg. 1108) We can there view the market as a dehumanizing force, depleting aura through simulation and replication. The synthetic quality of kitsch is ever present in our “hypercapitalism” of today and its totalizing marketplace. Famous works of art are used in everything from advertising to interior design. The banality of the market does “strip” the aura away from an authentic piece of art. By placing an artwork on a postcard and distributing copies of it all over the continent, the prestige of the original is indeed compromised. In DJ culture, this type of mass distribution is enforced via the club circuit and the ever thriving night life that exists within the underbelly of the most prominent “global cities”.<sup>18</sup> Such an occurrence brings up a variety of issues, most of which concern the disc-jockey’s role in an industrialization process. One could interpret the club DJ as a sort of guerilla warrior of the postmodern

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<sup>17</sup> A term coined by economist Robert Schiller in the late 1990s, and famously used by U.S. economic policymaker Alan Greenspan, to describe the domestic economy.

<sup>18</sup> Urban theorist Saskia Sassen coined the term “global city”.

era, launching an assault against the corporate music industry by honing his craft (and replicating artistic product) without that particular industry's consent<sup>19</sup>.

Concentrating on the performance side of DJ culture, the argument can be made that the night club spectator happens to witness original phenomena during each set of music since there is the well self-negotiated art of "the mix"<sup>20</sup> taking place. In such a situation, one person is capable of displaying originality in the manufacturing of electronic sounds. Sampling plays a critical role in the industrialization process of the club DJ (which is thought to be stale terrain by some traditionalists). However, by merging disparate noises the DJ can certainly display artistic talent and impress his club audience. Club music is in fact produced in a three stage process, and such a method of manufacturing deserves careful examination because of its affect on performance and consumption trends in international DJ culture.

At "bedrock",<sup>21</sup> or the most primary level of DJ culture, we find technocrats who design computer programs and synthesize drum lines. These individuals are essentially the architects of the most basic sounds consumers hear in "the practice of everyday life".<sup>22</sup> There are in fact acoustic musicians who record various sounds for these technocrats, in order to provide an organic component to these engineered sounds. This entire process of twenty-first century computer-enhanced manufacturing echoes the tenor of Walter Benjamin's aesthetic message of mechanical reproduction. Such a theory had intended relevance for the technology of the 1930s, yet the current mass replicating done

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<sup>19</sup> The Streets (a.k.a. Mike Skinner) refers to his British "garage" music as *Original Pirate Material* (2002). London, UK: Vice/Atlantic.

<sup>20</sup> Each DJ mixes or morphs songs together - back-to-back - throughout a set of music, and each particular mix may occur for only 5 seconds or up to 5 minutes (and varies in degree of subtlety). I would like to thank the disc-jockey Lady Inertia for aiding me in this specific arena of DJ culture.

<sup>21</sup> Ludwig Wittgenstein, in *On Certainty* (1972), describes a situation where rule followers exists on a most basic, primary level, stripped of social norms, and refer to as "bedrock". London, UK: Harper Perennial.

<sup>22</sup> Michel de Certeau (2002) *The Practice of Everyday Life*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

in academic laboratories by sound designers renders Benjamin's critical writings still viable. In such an industrialization process we find dialogue between the archetypal acoustic jazz musician and the technocrat.

The orchestral component in electronic music emerges when random noises leave the computers of technocrats and enter the studios of techno producers, who in fact create "layers" out of these synthesized sounds. The electronica producer's pursuit of harmony mirrors the tasks of accomplished jazz composers throughout history such as Duke Ellington and Charles Mingus. These electronic music producers are very much the engine fueling the mass, transnational club music market: DJs want to play their tracks and technocrats want to design their beats. They are in fact middle men, yet recently the capitalist marketplace has fetishized their product at such an intense rate that these producers have become consumer icons themselves. A contemporary trend is for the techno producer to release an album under his own name<sup>23</sup>. The Frankfurt School's cultural theorists would most likely observe that consumerism has reached a new intensity and irrationality when producers (who have a traditional "quietist"<sup>24</sup> role in the entertainment process) are pushed into the limelight. This act of buying a completely producer-marketed album signifies the insatiability of the consumer.

The third and final stage of club music production entails DJ *praxis*.<sup>25</sup> Club DJ's spin records from their favorite producers, and such performances (or "sets") at clubs or raves, are similar to "live" sets by jazz musicians because of the time window created

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<sup>23</sup> Producers in other genres have followed this trend, the most notable of which are The Neptunes (2003) *Clones*. Virginia Beach, VA: Star Trak Entertainment.

<sup>24</sup> John McDowell of the Pittsburg School of 20th century Anglo-analytic philosophy also has a "quietist" approach to the theory of rule following proposed by Austrian-British philosopher icon from Cambridge University Ludwig Wittgenstein, and reconfigured by philosopher of language and logician Saul Kripke in his seminal publication in the field titled *Wittgenstein on Rules and Private Language: an Elementary Exposition* (1982), Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

<sup>25</sup> Referring to 'activity' rather than 'action'

from the mixing process. Prominent club DJ's have their own distinct approach to sound morphing just as legendary jazz instrumentalists have unique ways of expressing improvisational statements. On this note, electronica's John Digweed may be quite similar to the jazz world's late tenor saxophonist Joe Henderson. Beyond the micro-concern of "the mix", the club DJ is also preoccupied with aggregate track selection. It is in fact the mix coupled with track selection that provides a just analogy to jazz improvisation. Such a preoccupation holds weight since it allows the DJ to be enterprising and engage his audience. The club DJ's audience is spellbound if he is successful in the capitalist propagated artistic pursuit. Therefore they will want to buy into this transmuted form of "The Culture Industry".

A dynamic situation emerges in DJ culture once electronically manufactured tracks leave producers studios and enter the club circuit. Such an act involves the unintentional "perpetuation of kitsch".<sup>26</sup> The electronica producer may spend countless hours relentlessly layering and crafting soundscapes only to have his masterpiece slaughtered by some novice club DJ who attempts to mix this state of art composition with a barbaric pop culture anthem. "Intention"<sup>27</sup> and context are two themes which are quite relevant in such a situation. From this angle, one is able to view how music industrialization affects one of the most ubiquitous aspects of "nightlife"<sup>28</sup>—it simply affects the music people dance to.<sup>29</sup> Creative license is indeed an issue here as well, and the archetypal club DJ is free to mix whichever two records together he feels is

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<sup>26</sup> Sociologist of consumer culture Sam Binkley (2000) writes of "kitsch as a self-perpetuating system".

<sup>27</sup> G.E.M. Anscombe (1958) *Intention*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

<sup>28</sup> Amon Tobin: "Nightlife", *Permutation*, Ninja Tune Records ZEN-CD-B00007OS2

<sup>29</sup> This was the case with Benny Goodman and jazz in the 1930s when Walter Benjamin was writing his masterpiece essay.

justified<sup>30</sup>. In such a situation prohibition comes from the audience and not the industrial complex. This says mountains for the type of originality DJ culture will be able to sustain under a capitalistic regime - its true Achilles heel may very well be the Bourdieuan tastes and preferences of its spectators.

The club DJ as *bricoleur*, though, may actually salvage, infuse and revitalize tepid recordings from the post-“golden era” of jazz history. What was considered unsuccessful by the industrialization complex in the 1970s (jazz record executives obsessed with the trend of musical “fusion”<sup>31</sup>), can now be sampled by electronica producers and spun by club DJ’s with a degree of enhanced originality. In this case, the capitalist marketplace is not facilitating the creative process. The uninhibited electronic composer can create “auratic” output. This artistic product is intended for the masses, yet is not as banal as the way Theodor W. Adorno conceptualized the culture industry. Contemporary cultural studies scholar Sarah Thornton writes in *Club Cultures: Music, Media, and Subcultural Capital* that “Dance crowds tend to be municipal, regional and national. Dance styles, for example, which need to be *embodied* rather than just bought, are much less transnational than other aspects of the culture.” (1996, pg. 3) Therefore, the international club circuit in which DJ culture thrives is in fact similar to an umbrella corporation, with each entity having its own corporate culture and internal logic. Jazz culture, on the other hand, is simply one unified grassroots organization.

The industrialization of music is in fact an incessant process, and record executives constantly order the recording of DJ’s techno music “live” in night clubs for

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<sup>30</sup> As University of South Florida Ph.D. candidate in Communication Antoine Hardy has keenly pointed out, DJ Deebow has perfected the art of abrupt mixes in the night club setting.

<sup>31</sup> One should be reminded that this type of corporate paradigm in the jazz industry paved the way for the Herbie Hancock album *Future Shock* in 1983 (New York, NY: Sony).

two reasons. One is that it is an inexpensive alternative to a studio project; two is because the executives hope to market the record as a more “authentic” artistic product (which in turn will boost sales). The executive aims for capturing an act of authenticity that has sellable qualities independent of time, when in fact the pursuit of recording a DJ in a club atmosphere is destined for yielding a product that is capable of exuding originality for the domestic listener with only the first few listens. After the recording is consumed several times, the club DJ’s mixes may become stale, whereas the jazz instrumentalist’s improvisations are so complex<sup>32</sup> they require hundreds of listens to be disseminated and absorbed. Therefore, DJ culture in fact places emphasis on live “sets” in the club circuit. The club recording is a nice memento for the techno DJ, yet the culture encourages him to constantly modify and perfect “the art of the mix” within his set and continually perform “live.” The most successful club DJs’ (Paul Okenfold, for instance) have the additional challenge of performing live to a wide range of audiences.<sup>33</sup> Part of the responsibility of representing industrialization at-large is to continually appease all the peripheries of the market which originally brought the DJ mass appeal.

In terms of jazz, legendary avant-garde jazz saxophonist Charles Gayle has told the apprentice that “The first time you picked up the saxophone and played...that was the most original statement you will ever make as a musician.”<sup>34</sup> Jazz recordings may not diminish the prestige of an instrumentalist in the same fashion as a club recording of a DJ can, but jazz improvisers who listen to instrumentalists’ recordings with a high frequency

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<sup>32</sup> Such as tenor saxophonist John Coltrane’s improvisation on the title track to his album *Giant Steps* (1959) New York, NY: Atlantic Records.

<sup>33</sup> The issue of track selection and demographics is indeed another issue.

<sup>34</sup> Personal communication: Charles Gayle told me this in January of 2000 during my first private lesson with him at his apartment in the East Village of Manhattan in New York City, footsteps away from Charlie Parker’s Avenue B home.



risk making trite statements when soloing on the bandstand. The industrialization complex in such a scenario is in fact a survey of the entire culture (executives want to put out and sell records from all demographics). Although corporate record labels intend to promote multicultural and fringe movements in jazz, it is simply their presence that hinders originality. Lennie Tristano famously remarked in 1951 that if Charlie Parker would have found it necessary to “evoke plagiarism laws” after he introduced "bebop" improvisational statements in the 1940s, “he could sue almost anybody who made a record in the last ten years.” (Priestley, 2006) The lack of originality perpetuates itself from one generation of improvisers to the next through the corporately subsidized recording process. Unchanged in jazz culture is the aggregate industrialization of its music (on a structural level)...Its product constantly reaches instrumentalists in their formative stages, which as jazz legend Charles Gayle would believe, stunts artistic growth.

The aspiring club DJ finds himself in a much different cultural climate than the young jazz instrumentalist. Another jazz legend, saxophonist David S. Ware preaches about “raising the bar”<sup>35</sup> in the avant-garde jazz idiom and he believes that the young "lion"<sup>36</sup> should honor the many generations of interpreters of the music before he steps into a night club and performs for an audience or records for public consumption. David S. Ware believes such a practice will help put this distinctive “music in its proper place” within the cultural sphere. Some observers would make the remark that the archetypal jazz "lion" is burdened by the culturally rich history of the music. The argument would entail that the jazz musician has to spend countless hours mimicking the styles of scads of

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<sup>35</sup> Personal communication: 1999-2001, Scotch Plains, N.J.

<sup>36</sup> In jazz culture, a "lion" is a young musician.

titan instrumentalists from the music's history before he is allowed to step outside the "woodshed"<sup>37</sup> and make an original statement of his own. To make matters worse, the industrialization complex is ultra-sensitive to the fact it propagates a homogenized, unoriginal aesthetic, and therefore corporate records labels looks to market "authentic" sounds to the consumer. If the young jazz musician is to subscribe to David S. Ware's artistic philosophy, then it may very well take a lifetime before that musician masters a century of improvisational statements and is at last fully-prepared to make a distinct, marketable statement of his own.

Contrary to the "stand on the shoulder of giants" approach of jazz culture, the club DJ finds himself navigating new terrain. The aspiring DJ is in fact encouraged to get into the club and perfect his "set" very early on in his career. The results are sounds which are a bit coarser than jazz in some cases, and the typical clubber may in fact witness more mistakes from its DJ than the jazz connoisseur does from the instrumentalist. Nonetheless, critics who argue that techno lacks an originality quality are looking beyond the fact that the club DJ is virtually a postmodern "bohemian" who relentlessly works at independently marketing and distributing his art to the proletariat via the international club circuit. It is the ubiquitous DJ who is far removed from formal industrialized music, while on the other hand we find the electronic music producer and technocrat much more embedded within the corporate framework of the recording process.

Both the club DJ and the jazz instrumentalist of the twenty-first century find themselves with revenue streams that would have seemed unimaginable to the jazz musician of the Frankfurt School's early to mid-twentieth century era. With the emergence of the internet came the development of companies that encourages artistic

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<sup>37</sup> In jazz culture, the "woodshed" is where one practices music, and practicing music is called "shedding".

self-promotion, such as CDBaby.com<sup>38</sup>. Without the founding of a publishing company under the auspices of BMI<sup>39</sup> or ASCAP<sup>40</sup>, the electronic music producer, club DJ, or jazz musician (or for that matter a musician from any idiom) can release an album with this West Coast company who markets and distributes an artistic product internationally via their website. It is a common occurrence for the twenty-first century musician to register his name as a website, and cognizant of that trend, CDBaby places a direct link on their artist's page to that site. The emergence of the internet has privatized the industrialization process for the twenty-first century musician. Instead of attempting to create a demo-tape in a lifeless studio and send it out to a hundred record executives in effort to get signed to a major corporate record label, the techno DJ finds himself in the exuberant night club, perfecting his "set" in front of the public. By doing so, he hopes to put the astoundingly original "live" recording<sup>41</sup> on his website and self-market it to a mass audience international in scope. Both jazz culture and DJ culture's musicians' register domain names today as industry survival techniques. The Frankfurt School would certainly find these market mediated acts disturbing.

Concert promoters historically serve as corporate record label attachés in jazz culture. The trend started when jazz promoter George Wein's planned all star "jam sessions" in the 1940s that were recorded and subsequently released on music powerhouse Verve Records. Strangely existing directly beside these corporately

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<sup>38</sup> CDBaby officially considers itself "a little online record store that sells CDs by independent musicians". They pride themselves on "only selling records that come directly from the musicians". Organizationally they perpetuate the grassroots type of philosophy that fosters musical originality.

<sup>39</sup> Broadcast Music Incorporated is the conventional way for composers to register their songs when wanting to release them to the mass public.

<sup>40</sup> American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers are considered the second largest corporately controlled publishing house. Both BMI and ASCAP also provide copyright protection for music which is one hundred percent improvised.

<sup>41</sup> "The spirit of the moment" as star jazz musician Joshua Redman calls it.

underwritten concerts are the fertile artistic endeavors of night club proprietors - the very hosts of the events. The Frankfurt School criticized modernity at-large for "reifying"<sup>42</sup> cultural pursuits; the independent night club proprietor gives the instrumentalist or DJ a stage to grow artistically on. Such an opportunity can help reverse an industry's cultural lag per establishment. Transferring agency from the artistic producer to the hosting distributor exudes empowerment anathema to Theodor W. Adorno's *Negative Dialectics*. One may want to think of the concept of a morphed "grassroots industrialization" as a counterapproach to the Frankfurt School's twentieth century critical theory of society.

Electronic music is in fact an "umbrella term",<sup>43</sup> and there are many varieties of club DJ's. What Theodor W. Adorno saw as a new low in the 1940s may be the music considered "trance" today, which has its own subculture within DJ culture, whereas the music referred to as "drum and bass" has its own distinct demographic structure and is generally regarded to be spun by a DJ with more authentic artistic qualities. The high pitch beats and trite progressions associated with archetypal "trance" music may remind the listener of the kitschy jazz of Kenny G, whereas "drum and bass" exudes the authenticity possessed by the most serious avant-garde jazz musicians. In jazz culture, the industry has in fact fetishized the compositions and improvisational statements of a select group of musicians from the 1950s and 1960s. These dead musicians' most unsuccessful and unoriginal products are marketed today under the scheme that "only the true aficionado listens to these recordings." This reflects the nefarious nature of the

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<sup>42</sup> Social theorist David Gartman's 1991 "Culture as Class Symbolization or Mass Reification: A Critique of Bourdieu's *Distinction*," *American Journal of Sociology* 97: 421-447.

<sup>43</sup> I would like to thank David Lee, Ph.D. student at the University of South Florida Department of Communication and previous New York club DJ, for reminding me of this crucial fact.

culture industry that Theodor W. Adorno warned the consumer about over a half a century ago.

The modern culture industry is tightly interconnected and multi-faceted. Its cross marketing schemes are subtly seductive; if one industrialized initiative does not work for executives in DJ culture, they very well may attempt to revamp it and market it to jazz culture. In *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1944), Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer equate this type of culture of modernity with a new form of “barbarism”<sup>44</sup>, as previously emphasized. The authors attempt to point out that the enlightenment originally symbolized progress and reason (the type of romantic<sup>45</sup> quality we usually associate with Enlightenment figures such as Jean-Jacques Rousseau), yet modernity’s capitalist culture is in fact bombarded with fragments of *kitsch* that bear a banal stamp of the market. Adorno and Horkheimer believed that modern society had in fact sunk to a new low in the propagating of a new mass culture centered on television programming and popular music. Instead of the consumer being empowered by the marketplace, he was actually corrupted by these “low” cultural mediums of mass society. Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer saw a certain new type of “barbarity” (1998, pg. 132) associated with a “cultural lag”, not of jazz’s homeland of America, but of Europe; the market was out of control (unrestrained) in a certain sense, and the subsequent classificatory mechanisms of “low” and “high” brow only helped to make sense (culturally) of this capitalist enterprise. The jazz establishment is not free from the tyranny of these cultural norms, whereas nascent DJ music operates in many cases without obeying formal protocol.

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<sup>44</sup> Douglas Kellner (2000)

<sup>45</sup> Echoing the infinitive possibilities associated with the pursuit of reason in The Enlightenment's philosophies

The club DJ may not follow predetermined practices of a century-old culture, but one could remake the argument that the DJ does know his audience well. Theodor W. Adorno writes that “It would be romanticizing to assume that formerly art was entirely pure, that the creative artist thought only in terms of the inner consistency of the artifact and not also of its effect upon the spectators.” (2001, pg. 159) Such a statement implies that the standardization and commercialization of art and culture may not have been a twentieth century development. However, we should make a distinction between commercializing art (in terms of marketability), and the act of the artist simply acknowledging his or her audience. The commodification of art may in time be deemed the late capitalist phenomena of the twentieth century. Entertainment, on the other hand, has a long history as a commodity. Even before the emergence of capitalism, feudalist and mercantilist accounts of entertainment involved purchasable public displays. Theater and music were presented in venues that operated under the profit motive. What upset Theodor W. Adorno about twentieth century entertainment was that the market had interfered with the creative license of the artists; we had talented film directors, for example, who were forced by Hollywood executives to make movies that would appeal to a certain audience. Instead of allowing the director to choose what film to make, these executives created a Marxian compulsory labor situation.

In the early years of the twenty-first century, jazz culture is still thriving and DJ culture is raging forward. Both cultures have their Adornian "low" moments of artistically trite production. At other occasions, the industrialization complex finds itself infatuated with only one culture (manifested in the form of a grandiose marketing scheme that ranges decades), which in turn greatly enhances the other culture's original music

product during that period. The controversial issue in contemporary jazz culture involves the "preservation" versus "innovation" dilemma, which was broached by the discussion of saxophonist David S. Ware's conception of music. As far as a major problem in DJ culture, one only needs to examine the identity-crisis of the club DJ. Is he in fact a musician in a way a jazz instrumentalist is, or does he resemble more of the traits we find in the technocrat at "bedrock"? Either way, in both cultures the audience may sometimes observe original displays of artistic talent. While jazz culture feuds over the direction and interpretation of its historically-rich music, DJ culture will continue to suffer from entropic self-doubts that its typical night club is administering a bureaucratic art form rather than fostering a musical art form. A resolution to this culture's hyper-sensitive state would be to emphasize the "audio graphic art" component of the club DJ's morphing process. Such mediation allows for a synthesis of industrialization and originality.

Both cultures' younger performers are members of a united front known as generation "D" (the digital generation). Digital distribution is the central way each culture's artists can reach the consumer, producing original "twenty-first century music" in the process. This in turn may rapidly transform consumerism, paving the way for a new relevant critical theory of society. One might expect a strange coalescence of digital media "scapes"<sup>46</sup> where the visual arts cross-fertilize the music mediated arts in mediums such as High Definition TV / DVD as well as periphery reaching online content<sup>47</sup>. These

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<sup>46</sup> Arjun Appadurai (1990) "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy" *Public Culture* (2) 2: 24. Durham, NC: Duke University Press.

<sup>47</sup> Internet programming will in fact converge with the High Definition component of the TV/ DVD.

elements could significantly reconstruct the marketplace, causing industrialized "paradigm"<sup>48</sup> shifts" that appease a new generation of "mass culture".

Originality may very well be redefined (or obscured via the process of enclosure) by these mini-technological revolutions. The digital generation of music downloading I am referring to above translates to me as touching on the delusional. For after all, it is only synthetics of earlier processed vinyl and standardization. For me, this appears to be what Gertrude Stein called the nihilists in France after the First World War: a "lost" and "disillusioned" generation of "ex-patriots" living on borrowed time. The stability of the integrity of the music industry is what is at question tomorrow and beyond.

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<sup>48</sup> Thomas Kuhn (1996) *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions: Third Edition*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.



IV. "Deep in the neighborhood"<sup>49</sup> of philosophical motivation in the musicians of 'new jazz', and the continued relevance of Theodor W. Adorno's aesthetic theory in their motivation.

Theodor W. Adorno considered music and philosophy as intersecting intellectual pursuits. The two particular musicians of 'new jazz' highlighted in this section of the paper were strategically selected on grounds concerning both their particular places in jazz history (especially within the development of the avant-garde jazz movement) and their early encounters with continental philosophical thought (in particular the aesthetics of music that arise through the assimilation of such a methodology in the humanities). What is primarily of concern on the latter ground is how these musicians applied continental philosophical thought towards their musical products. As explicated previously, Cecil Taylor was a co-founder of the avant-garde jazz movement. What was not disclosed to many, however, was that he spent his youth reading the nineteenth century continental literature of Arthur Schopenhauer, in the same fashion as philosophy-consumers read Theodor W. Adorno and his wealth of continental literature.

Free jazz drummer William Hooker emerged on to the international avant-garde music scene by performing in the Jazz Lofts which lined Downtown Manhattan during the 1970s after 'new jazz' had gained initial acceptance. His studies, however, were in part distributed among a variety of the humanities at Berkeley during the chaotic 1960s, and during such time he incorporated the musical aesthetics of Theodor W. Adorno's teacher Alban Berg in his approach to 'new jazz'. We find William Hooker a generation or two removed from Cecil Taylor (the ecstatic Frank Wright's and Sunny Murray's of the late 1960s and early 1970s are generally considered his direct predecessors). Cecil Taylor may have been the first musician to experiment in avant-garde jazz, and this

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<sup>49</sup> Cooper-Moore, *Deep in the Neighborhood of History and Influence*. Hopscotch Records, HOP05-CD.

experimentation is generally considered to have begun in his Boston apartment during 1956.

In the particular album which will be critiqued below, in the terminology of continental philosophy and aesthetics of music, we find Cecil Taylor in Ljubljana during 1976 - two decades after his initial integration of avant-garde jazz extended techniques. He is joined by tenor saxophonist David S. Ware, who belongs to the same generation of avant-garde jazz improvisers as drummer William Hooker. David S. Ware had begun to integrate the concept of thematic improvisation pioneered by his mentor Sonny Rollins, and this liner approach to jazz is something which Theodor W. Adorno did not anticipate when he associated jazz improvisation with “frills” and embellishments in his writings (which in turn predated bandleader Cecil Taylor’s initial musical experimentations on the piano by two decades). From the "chamber jazz" (a term Adorno would have thought to have been an oxymoron but possibly promising) of Cecil Taylor’s live date with David S. Ware, a futural jump is made by two decades (once again) in which William Hooker is found engaging in a live Bay-area session that incorporates inter-idiom sounds.

These sounds are something that Theodor W. Adorno wrote about when he describes Igor Stravinsky’s orchestral experiments with jazz. However, in the music at hand we are bequeathed a social commentary of urban aesthetics via DJ culture’s 1990s "illbient" movement<sup>50</sup>. William Hooker’s particular collaborative of "new music" production encapsulates such commentary. It must be remembered in light of the

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<sup>50</sup> "Illbient" is a dark, urban/post-industrial/post-hip-hop take on the ambient music pioneered by Brian Eno. Joining William Hooker on the session is DJ Olive, one of the co-founders of the "illbient" movement. Adornian theories of modernity and mass culture will be examined in the critique of William Hooker’s session in light of the post-industrial sounds produced in this inter-genre appropriation of ‘new jazz’ which took place during that one particular night of recording in 1996, and parallels to the music generated by the collaboration will be drawn.

"illbient" musical subculture and its embracement of jazz sounds, that the urban theory that lies at its core may possibly be a postmodern appropriation of the "urban consumer culture" theory founded by Theodor W. Adorno's early influences Siegfried Kracauer and Neo-Kantian Georg Simmel. Therefore, such Adornian concepts such as "The Culture Industry" may find themselves as the missing links in the connection of Weimar Germany's and Postmodern America's critical theories of society.

a.) Cecil Taylor's *Dark To Themselves*: Nietzschean and Schopenhauerian aesthetics of music.

Cecil Taylor takes a percussive approach to playing avant-garde jazz piano. He has historically viewed the piano and its keys as "eighty-eight tuned drums"<sup>51</sup>. The rhythmic implications for such a musical outlook challenges Adorno's early thesis that jazz was rhythmically unsophisticated. Performativity in Cecil Taylor registers with the musical "ecstasy" Friedrich Nietzsche describes exuding from the Dionysian drive in *The Birth of Tragedy: Out of the Spirit of Music*. The most conservative interpreter of *Dark To Themselves*<sup>52</sup>, whose free-form improvisation represents the characteristic Cecil Taylor concert experience, would describe the music produced as "controlled chaos".

The rapid notes which flow from Cecil Taylor's percussive approach to the piano do indeed represent Nietzsche's Dionysian spirit of music found in *The Birth of Tragedy*. This is because those notes are in fact a product of unrestrained, pure improvisatory emotion rather than the Apollonian tightly structured composition. Although the cluster of notes emitting from Cecil Taylor and his 'new jazz' musicians' form "ecstatic" structures that are reminiscent of the Apollonian art of sculpture, there is a strong

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<sup>51</sup> Chapter Three's title in *As Serious as Your Life: John Coltrane and Beyond* (1992).

<sup>52</sup> Cecil Taylor, *Dark To Themselves*, Enja B000005C68-CD.

component of "de-intellectualization" at work in all the musicians' in the Cecil Taylor Unit, and that at "bedrock" which implies a Dionysian aesthetic intoxication at work.

Cecil Taylor's concept of musical "darkness" registers with philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer's aesthetically-informed pessimistic *Weltanschauung*. When Arthur Schopenhauer summarizes and dismisses Immanuel Kant's *thing-in-itself* in the opening of Section 31 of the *The World as Will and Representation* (Volume 1), he writes that there is "nothing but *will* in the sphere of this concept"<sup>53</sup>. One may have stumbled upon some of the genealogical origins of Nietzschean "unmasking" by such a critical statement, and we similarly find 'new jazz' musicians on the *Dark To Themselves* session unmasking creative energies (jettisoning and fragmenting conglomerated personas). It is the overcoming of the initial darkness created by masked aesthetic behavior amongst the musicians themselves which must be met. After camaraderie and openness are established between the members of the band, then there can be "free" dialogue. The musical interaction from such an open dialogue has the capacity of unmasking its consumers' worldliness by the process of overcoming-ness. Although the cultural theorist and Theodor W. Adorno institutional contact Herbert Marcuse called for sexual drives to be liberated in *Eros and Civilization: A Philosophical Inquiry into Freud* (1955), it was the Dionysian process of overcoming which was of chief importance to 'new jazz' musicians' at the time, who directed the energy to transgressing cliché-like musically engrained behavior.

The turn towards overcoming tertiary practices elevates listener receptivity in new music and allows the musicians themselves to in fact reach a simulated state of Dionysian "ecstasy" alongside their colleagues. Approaching an un-simulated act of overcoming,

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<sup>53</sup> (1969, pg. 170).

Michael E. Jones writes that, “Darkness is the realm of the erotic, which by its nature involves the blind acting out of instinctual drives”. (1994, pg. 28) It is only the initial Darkness unto oneself which must be overcome, and it is Cecil Taylor’s role as bandleader to artistically engage the sparking of such a musically-replicated process. This entails intuitive finesse, since the structural method of musical production in this particular session demands improvisatory "streams of consciousness".

David S. Ware, in a Nietzschean fashion, has remarked that music is an all encompassing way of life. In other words, the aesthetics of avant-garde jazz tends to filter over to all aspects and domains (even the inauthentic "everydayness", in the Heideggerian sense) of the musician drawn to employ the genre’s methods. Jazz critic Stanley Crouch has pointed out that David S. Ware’s former bandleader Cecil Taylor’s employment of libidinal musical methods may be interrelated to his private sphere, specifically to his sexual orientation. Michael E. Jones continues to aptly historically describe the Dionysian impulses in the music that Cecil Taylor performs by writing, “Jazz was the musical invitation rite for those who were interested, if not in the transvaluation of all values, then at least in a sexual life that had been released from what they perceived as the increasingly nonsensical burden of “Puritan” that is, Christian sexual morality” (ibid, pg. 86). The interconnectedness of Liberation in music and lifestyle become all the more apparent by Michael E. Jones’ reading of Nietzsche when the cultural exegesis is applied contextually to the thriving Cecil Taylor.

Liberation, both sonically and domestically<sup>54</sup>, leads one down the crooked path to utter chaos. In *Adorno's Nietzschean Narratives*, Karin Bauer states that, “In Adorno’s view, the projection of sheer chaos is just as much a product of the imagination as its

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<sup>54</sup> The liberation of Eros in Herbert Marcuse’s 1960s writings sparked an entire countercultural movement.

reverse, the projection of order. Adorno thus resists the Nietzschean tendency to declare all reality chaos.” (1999, pg. 83) Therefore Cecil Taylor’s musical project of structurally "controlled chaos" in *Dark To Themselves* seems all the more redeemable on Adornian grounds. The domestic sphere, however, is within the terrain of the real in the construction of a "cultural metaphysics"<sup>55</sup>. From the angle of such critical theorizing, Stanley Crouch may have been justified to challenge the inverse role Cecil Taylor’s sexual orientation has on his ecstatically unrestrained music and the historic place that music has within the larger jazz tradition in commercial America.

The genealogy of such Nietzschean aesthetic and cultural theorizing, finds its penultimate source in Cecil Taylor’s early philosophical influence Arthur Schopenhauer. There have been parallels made between Arthur Schopenhauer’s "will" and Miles Davis’ jazz outlook. Although Miles Davis was a pessimistically minded figure, (which registers with Arthur Schopenhauer’s philosophy) the unrelenting nature of Schopenhauerian "will" finds its musical counterpart in the rapacity of a Cecil Taylor improvisation. Christopher Janaway writes that, “Schopenhauer contends that the progression of musical notes through time is immediately understood by the human mind as an analogy of the progress of our own inner strivings”. (2002, pg. 85) Cecil Taylor’s "ecstasis" very much sums up such metaphysical strivings in the form of music mediated arts. From Cecil Taylor’s situation, one can trace the Nietzschean *will to power*’s reactionary emergence from Arthur Schopenhauer’s continental thought. In Arthur Schopenhauer’s the *will to live*<sup>56</sup>, a monastic portrait of sustenance is painted, while in

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<sup>55</sup> This phrase was coined by commentator Charles Levin and used in the title of his 1996 publication on Jean Baudrillard. (*Jean Baudrillard: A Study in Cultural Metaphysics*. Harvester Wheatsheaf, London).

<sup>56</sup> Wikipedia. “The Will to Power”, 2007. Retrieved: 24 Apr. 2007  
<[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The\\_Will\\_to\\_Power](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Will_to_Power)>

Friedrich Nietzsche's the *will to power*<sup>57</sup>, the issue of conglomerating influence, authority and control is proposed. It is not a coincidence that Cecil Taylor was originally launched onto the international jazz scene in 1966 by releasing an album titled *Conquistador!* on the Blue Note record label. Apparently, philosopher Arthur Schopenhauer's reactionary and critical rewriter Friedrich Nietzsche was in the mind of Cecil Taylor from the beginnings of his artistic career.

However, Cecil Taylor's band leaves one with the lasting impression that a destructive musical work of art was "thrown" (in a Heideggerian sense) onto them. Such a thought reverts to Schopenhauerian continental thought directly, and does not rest upon the critical writings of Friedrich Nietzsche. Theodor W. Adorno lectured on Arthur Schopenhauer's metaphysics and the *will to live* and labeled it "The liquidation of the self". (2001) A meditation on negativity and darkness for Cecil Taylor as bandleader has the destructive qualities of Arthur Schopenhauer does "will" for some critics of avant-garde jazz. A revealing footnote to Theodor W. Adorno's *Metaphysics: Concepts and Problems* reads that Arthur Schopenhauer originally, "depicts the Will as a 'blind urge, a dark, dull drive, remote from anything perceptible'." (2001, pg. 170) Blindness may be a characteristic of Friedrich Nietzsche's Dionysian drive in *The Birth of Tragedy*, yet the "will to power" we find of *Zarathustra* need not entail imperceptivity of the subject or incoherence on behalf of the "new jazz" musician.

From such an Adornian reading of Arthur Schopenhauer, visible to one are the Jungian<sup>58</sup> traits nascent in *The World as Will and Representation* as well as the Dionysian drive. In addition, it seems as Cecil Taylor's musicians are collectively attempting to tap

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<sup>57</sup> (ibid).

<sup>58</sup> And from Carl Jung's influence, English literature is left with Joseph Conrad's *The Heart of Darkness*.

into an energy which is universally libidinal. David S. Ware describes such efforts as "harvesting crops in a fertile field". (ibid) The publication *Signal to Noise* has labeled his appropriation of Cecil Taylor's extended technique as a way of "Touching on the Transcendental". (2006) Nineteenth century philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche stressed spatial directiveness or orientation in *Zarathustra*. We in fact find jazzman David S. Ware during his twentieth-century apprenticeship with Cecil Taylor encouraged to musically look within phenomena and uncover their underlying characteristics, and then as a solo artist moving to try to reach above and gleam in the presence of celestial aesthetic spirit. And it was Cecil Taylor as pianist who had the ingenuity to initially influence, orchestrate, and commence the Zarathrustrian-like hiking up and over this mountain of "ecstatic" music in David S. Ware, one of jazz's preeminent artistic career examples of excellence in performance on the saxophone (the very instrument that Theodor W. Adorno despairingly once wrote-off as "rigid").

b.) William Hooker's *Mindfulness*: The Heideggerian and (social) Neo-Kantian approaches to "illbient" infused 'new jazz' sounds.

Before embarking on a Heideggerian analysis of the 'new jazz' album *Mindfulness*<sup>59</sup> (and present an Adornian rejoinder), it is important to continue the discussion of the cultural ramifications of the mid-to-late 1990s emergence of "illbient" music performed in contextual jazz settings. DJ culture in general, from which the "illbient" subculture springs, may have been the music of Dionysian raves which represented an advancement of the jazz establishment. The term "illbient" is classified under, and is an outgrowth from, the umbrella musical style "ambient". Ambient music entails broadcasting the sounds of nature, while "illbient" music takes nature to be the

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<sup>59</sup> William Hooker, *Mindfulness*, Knitting Factory Works B00000209S-CD.



sounds of the urban metropolis. Since the "illbient" DJ incorporated jazz sounds in his production of music, the music itself may have represented the third and final phase of modern non-lyrical American music (i.e. hip-hop and rock), following "bebop" and avant-garde jazz, respectively. Ambient music involved generating "background" sounds for the listener to meditate or practice everyday life from, whereas "illbient" music is more aggressive and challenged the listener to critically engage the production through a more primal reflection.

The 1990s found the other seminal "illbient" DJ integrating sounds of the 1960s avant-garde jazz "New York Art Quartet", and sampling the audio from the track "Sweet-Black Dada Nihilismus" featuring Leroi Jones a.k.a. Amiri Baraka. The poetics of such a track dismissed the French existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre as the archetypal White philosopher and sought to renew a pure Black aesthetic of music by renewing faith in quintessential African-American musical figures such as Billie Holiday. The composition was presented by the particular DJ without lyrics of bigotry and in the context of a jazz saxophone solo. In recent years this co-founder of "illbient" music has delved deeper into jazz history and "remixed" Charlie Parker's famous 1940s composition "Ko-Ko". Theodor W. Adorno may have seen all this "remixing" and sonic integration taking place as commercial supported ploys, not to advance the music, but to offer the consumer's in America slightly modified musical commodities. This would be done in hopes that the actual "style" of artistic commodification taking place would become trendy enough to sell excess amounts of its product.

The "illbient" DJ that William Hooker interacts with on the *Mindfulness* session produces dense layers of sounds that reflect the urban scenery from which the subculture

sprung. Although in this case, the music mediated art is presented on a jazz record, the urban theory of scattered integration which informs the subcultural movement has been applied to the only other completely original American art form - comic books. As "illbient" music peaked in 1999, cartoonist Ben Katchor collaborated with the new music outfit "Bang on a Can" and produced a comic book-opera titled *The Carbon Copy Building* with a similar plot to that of the "illbient" *Dasein*. That thesis was, in a megacity surrounded by millions of people, one can still feel like the loneliest person in the world (which registers with Neo-Marxist cultural alienation as well).

In reply to such a thesis, one could acknowledge that there were "illbient" DJ's throughout the second half of the 1990's incorporating the actual sounds of Ben Katchor's urban dilemma of decay. These were the distant sounds of police sirens (that Ben Katchor's loner could possibly hear from his studio apartment), etc. Such sounds aurally capture the urban *Dasein* rather than the sounds that make up the existence of living amongst nature - raindrops, etc. The archetypal ambient situation from which these DJ's had reconfigured and assimilated for purposes of their own "being-in-the-world" was done to act musically "authentic" despite their precise Heideggerian "thrownness".

The key track on William Hooker's *Mindfulness* is "Archetypal Space". In philosopher Hubert L. Dreyfus' summary of *Being and Time*, Division 1, he approaches phenomenologist Martin Heidegger's notion of "Spatiality and Space". To draw a parallel to the themes of direction in *Zarathustra*, Hubert L. Dreyfus devotes a passage of the section to Orientation (which twentieth century French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty also dealt with in the performance studies rich text of *The Phenomenology of*

*Perception*). Hubert L. Dreyfus writes that, “Spatiality is not organized into places and regions, but it has directions, right/left, front/back and up/down. Dasein orients itself in terms of these directions.” (1990, pg. 136)

The above Heideggerian theme is ever so loaded down with early-Nietzschean philosophizing (the issue of spatial direction, especially vertical movement, taken from *Zarathustra*'s journey). It describes the logic that informed William Hooker's subsequent creations of musical works of art, such as 2000's *The Distance Between Us*.<sup>60</sup> On the 1996 set-closer “Archetypal Space”, DJ Olive creates a plush, luxuriant sonic landscape that has such effervescence that it begins to disorient the listener. Displaying discipline, and acting out of “mindfulness”, the later, more pure Heideggerian approach to explaining “*Dasein*” as “care”, jazzman William Hooker brings back DJ Olive from the far reaches of theoretical space by implementing a series of reality tests on the drum set: rudimentary exercises which include ‘turning the beat around’ and tightly staccato cymbal accentuations to let his guest “illbient” DJ know the constraints of this particular employment of spatiality. The musical source material used on the track is from Uzezt Plaush's “For the Falling Dream”, and the subliminal nature of the move towards the downward direction registers with early Freudian psychoanalytic approaches to unconsciousness occurrences in dreams as well as Martin Heidegger's own philosophical anthropology of “*existentiell*” “falling-ness”<sup>61</sup>.

In *Heidegger and the Issue of Space*, Alejandro Vallega finds that, “In the slipping away of spatiality between objective space and pure temporality an interruption occurs in the transcendental interpretation of being. This is an event intimated in the

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<sup>60</sup> William Hooker, *The Distance Between Us*, Knitting Factory Works B00000G4SO-CD.

<sup>61</sup> These are personal identity issues which are of prime concern to many contemporary metaphysicians.

withdrawal that remains beyond transcendental thought, an event that calls for a way of engaging the disclosedness of events of beings and their spatiality.” (pg. 129, 2003)

Favoring the Neo-Kantian Edmund Husserl’s investigations into a "pure phenomenology" as basic presence (“to the things themselves”<sup>62</sup>), over the consequently hermeneutic project of a "fundamental ontology" employed by Martin Heidegger from the opening of *Being and Time*, Alejandro Vallega points to the problem history presents in "de-concealing" the phenomena of *Dasein*. The spatiotemporal structure of sheer existence is adulterated when "bracketed" and mapped using a historical approach.

The fundamental rhythmic exercises William Hooker employs to restrain the transcendent musical behavior of his DJ is rich in historical approaches to creating jazz (these are the basic percussive elements Theodor W. Adorno criticizes as archetypal to the jazz sound), and we find slight subcultural incongruence (through presenting "illbient" production amongst "free jazz"). The notion of employing a musical method rich with history or rich because of history, (the hermeneutic circle of music) creates cultural dissonance on an aural level, and one finds the performers in the last seconds of “Archetypal Space” producing sounds that fade away free from self-certain musical progeny (phenomenologically). A type of hollowness registers with the listener when futural repercussions of such sonic dissonance are anticipated.

One characteristic that keeps the listener of *Mindfulness* grounded, especially on the discombobulating musical post-Cartesianism of the track “Principle of Duality”, is the poetics of William Hooker. The drummer shouts to the audience to “Lose Yourself to Find Yourself”, a statement that registers with Christianity as well as the Heideggerian concept of "double concealment" or negated "un-truth". For in “The Origin of the Work

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<sup>62</sup> Edmund Husserl, “Philosophy as Rigorous Science” (1911, 1965).

of Art”, Martin Heidegger philosophizes that, “Truth is un-truth... Truth happens only by establishing itself in the strife and the free space opened up by truth itself.” (1993, pg. 185-186.) (To employ counterpoint literary techniques, Theodor W. Adorno is famous for writing in *Negative Dialectics* that “the whole is the untrue”.) William Hooker’s poetics broach the issues of distrust and suspicion, which are necessary consequences from incorporating concealment into an identity which is by nature endowed with a pure "existentiell" orientation.

The concept of "intuition" is brought up in the poetry of William Hooker, and one must look past philosopher Martin Heidegger to Immanuel Kant in this situation, for as John McCumber writes of Immanuel Kant in Rebecca Kukla’s edited essays on aesthetics and cognition in the critical Kantian philosophy, “Since beauty cannot be conceptually defined, such an idea must be presented as an intuition, and so is more appropriately called an ‘ideal’ than an ‘idea’. Such an intuition, moreover, cannot be an instance of what Kant calls “free beauty,” which is a matter of pure aesthetic (sensory) form and cannot be defined in any way...” (2006, pg. 273) Such philosophizing is in line with William Hooker’s most recent work, *Black Mask*, which Hooker describes as “a cold and scary thing- we ask what is it and we approach – we know. It is more scary than we thought....As always- my works and efforts go on without a mask”<sup>63</sup>. In addition, the case of Cecil Taylor’s Schopenhauerian and Nietzschean overtones are present in such an artistic disclaimer (Arthur Schopenhauer in the beginning of the disclaimer, Friedrich Nietzsche towards the end), which find their unadulterated modern source in Immanuel

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<sup>63</sup> William Hooker, *Black Mask*, Knitting Factory Works B000062Y8I-CD.

Kant and their most apocalyptic transmutations in Martin Heidegger, leaving us with the effected and inspired middle ground musical arts of "Hooker without Masks"<sup>64</sup>.

Neo-Kantian social philosophies of space are a way to bypass German critical theorists' remarks on Martin Heidegger's "de-concealment" that finds itself rooted in Nietzschean aesthetics to some degree. The Neo-Kantian *Raum* controversy and Emile Durkheim's French Neo-Kantian positivist methods of theorizing social space is more complimentary in developing a critical social theory line of argument. Furthermore, when the Neo-Kantian social theorizing movement is brought back to its native soil, we find Georg Simmel's anti-positivism in 1903's "The Metropolis and Mental Life" essay only further supporting a critical social philosophy of space, all that could be understood today in the context of the sort of 1990s "illibent" music we found in William Hooker's collaboration with DJ Olive in the seminal *Mindfulness*, in addition to Ben Katchor's comic book-opera narrative and display of the loneliest Gothamite. Once again, Emile Durkheim's French Neo-Kantian positivist social theorizing of space matches up quite well with William Hooker and DJ Olive's "illbient"-infused "Archetypal Space", and Georg Simmel's Neo-Kantian anti-positivist social philosophy of "The Metropolis and Mental Life" works quite well with the consumer culture predicament of alienation brought forth by Ben Katchor's urban comic book-opera. In bypassing Alejandro Vallega's Heidegger and instead examining the issue of space brought forth in terms of such turn of turn-of-the-twentieth-century Neo-Kantianism, Theodor W. Adorno's Frankfurt School critical theory re-emerges as a point of department in such new musical aesthetics of avant-garde musicians and the subcultures they have generated by practicing

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<sup>64</sup> The genealogy of this phrase is derived from philosopher Ofelia Schutte's *Beyond Nihilism: Nietzsche without Masks* (1984), Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

their art in the most authentic forms possible during the transition years of the following century.

It is Theodor W. Adorno who in fact launches an assault on Heideggerian existentialism and phenomenology's style in his later period's *The Jargon of Authenticity* and *Negative Dialectics*. He finds the terminology employed by Martin Heidegger burdened with embellishment. On the jazz scene, William Hooker's collaborative music efforts are scrutinized by traditionalists' or purists' who act in the same parasitic fashion as philosophy's Theodor W. Adorno, attempting to put an end to illuminating discovery on grounds of false appropriation. Obviously, new-ness in the presentation of the history of ideas and the history of music have both come under heavy attack by commentators over the course of the last century.

c.) Frankfurt School contra Heidegger?: A phenomenological perspective of the atonal turn in jazz, contrasted with Theodor W. Adorno's attempt to articulate a (new) music philosophy.

In the early 1940s, a musical subculture was emerging from the New York jazz scene's underground clubs. At this time, the pianists Thelonious Monk and Bud Powell began supermodifying harmonic progressions to the point that every measure of traditional jazz compositions contained at least two chords, sometimes up to four chords (that fell on each beat of the measure.) The sounds created from such a musical appropriation were dense to the point that they reflected a fair amount of dissonance. The improvisers who performed over such harmonic structures - Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie in particular - had no choice but to rely on rapid chromaticism in order to satisfy the chordal progressions presented to them.<sup>65</sup> The Monk's and Powell's held a crucial

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<sup>65</sup> Most musical scholars believed that Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie pioneered this chromaticism while working in the Billy Eckstein 'Big Band' together, and that Thelonious Monk and Bud Powell

"late-modern" place in the passage of jazz harmonic tradition by founding "bebop" and inspiring others during the post-1958 era to experiment in avant-garde jazz atonal structures. These pianists were the Igor Stravinsky's and Richard Wagner's of jazz, and the atonal compositions of Ornette Coleman were harmonically iconoclastic later in the year 1959 the same way as Arnold Schoenberg's atonal compositions went "against the grain" of the classical idiom earlier in the century.

With the release of *Free Jazz* in December 1960/early 1961 on Atlantic Records, which contained several notable "post-bop" jazz musicians such as Freddie Hubbard, alto saxophonist and 2007 Pulitzer Prize winner Ornette Coleman left the jazz establishment in shock. The releasing of this album was essentially the jazz establishment's attempt at a phenomenology of music, which had deep roots in the modern Western philosophical thought. German jazz scholar and musicologist Ekkehard Jost relies on a quote from Martin T. William's indispensably comprehensive publication *The Jazz Tradition* to preliminary sum up what Ornette Coleman's free, atonal approach to jazz entailed.

Martin T. William's particular quoting of Ornette Coleman covers a basic methodological concern of Husserlian phenomenology, transplanted in the terrain of music mediated arts: "Let's play the music and not the background" (1994 pg. 14 and 1970, pg. 207). The very "principle of phenomenology"<sup>66</sup> meant eschewing background material in order to "get down" to the basic phenomena themselves. One can find Ornette Coleman's late 1950s atonal jazz serving as a musical phenomenology, and Taylor Carman states in

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supermodified chord progressions in order to fit the rapacity of such musical improvisations. However, musical scholars should remember that Thelonious Monk was Charlie Parker and Dizzy Gillespie's senior by a significant number of years, and Monk may have pioneered dense bebop harmony as an underground musician without a cabaret license (which meant zero presence in clubs) years before Parker and Gillespie met and experimented improvisationally in Eckstein's 'big band'.

<sup>66</sup> Taylor Carman (2007) in *The Cambridge Companion to Heidegger*, ed. Charles B. Guignon (Second Edition), "The Principle of Phenomenology".



philosopher Charles Guignon's edited *Cambridge Companion to Heidegger* (2007, pg. 1) that the philosophical movement of phenomenology held such a crucial place in the development of the modern Western intellectual tradition because it inspired hermeneutics and even ideology critique. Ornette Coleman's phenomenologically-rich atonal approach in *Free Jazz* did indeed lead to types of jazz which abandoned a grounding structure and bequeathed to avant-garde jazz musicians a methodology. Further, to draw a parallel to ideology critique, the methods employed by Ornette Coleman's instrumental contemporaries contained the proper amount of freedom to intertwine messages of "political" dissent within their musical production. Jazz history's musical equivalent of political dissent was Charles Mingus protesting the American South's violation of civil rights in his composition "Fables of Faubus" from the album *Mingus Ah Um*. This, of course, aptly took place in the years leading up to and throughout the turbulent 1960s.

In 1964, we found the musician Bill Dixon forming a collective which launched a group of Coleman-inspired freely composed jazz concerts and were billed as "The October Revolution in Jazz". Similarly, a group of Chicago musicians', which included Anthony Braxton (a saxophonist whose employments of Ornette Coleman's atonal techniques were subsequently evident by the release of his album *3 Compositions of New Jazz* - the first time the phrase "New Jazz" was used in the release of recorded musical product), came together in the mid-1960s and founded a collective entitled the AACM (The Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians). This group claimed that their connection to the early twentieth century Black aesthetic of jazz was stronger and purer than other civil and politically minded jazz collectives, simply because they resided

in the Delta hub city of Chicago rather than the Anglophonized commercial East-Coast jazz scene centered in New York City. Echoes of Theodor W. Adorno are evident in such a musical tactic. This is not because of the ethnic implications, but because of the commercial ones. The phenomenology of Edmund Husserl and especially Martin Heidegger, to which Theodor W. Adorno's literature was a strenuous critique of, is also evident in the AACM's tactics, since the collective had the same basic project of returning to, and recovering, source phenomena<sup>67</sup>. The only deviation from this early continental philosophical method was that the phenomena the AACM were attempting to relocate - by bracketing external malaise<sup>68</sup> - was of the aesthetic nature<sup>6970</sup>.

Commentator Stefan Muller-Doohm has an entire chapter of his intellectual biography on Theodor W. Adorno dedicated to the critical theorist's scholarly activities during the late 1950s and early 1960s. In his comprehensive survey of this short period of Theodor W. Adorno's academic career - which, as shown above, coincides with the very origin of avant-garde jazz culture - Stefan Muller-Doohm presents Adorno's developments as musicologist in the section "The purpose of life: understanding the language of music". During this, the later stages of Theodor W. Adorno's thought, a book on Gustav Mahler was generated which gathered a sufficient amount of attention from followers of heterodox classical musical production to reclaim his lectureship at a summer European "New Music" camp intended for emerging composers. (2005, pg. 396)

However, the jazz idiom - with its burgeoning avant-garde culture - was given zero

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<sup>67</sup> Paul Ricoeur has labeled such an act as "The Hermeneutics of Recovery". (1990)

<sup>68</sup> In the musical form of the commercialized New York jazz scene.

<sup>69</sup> The restoration of a pure Black musical aesthetic is of concern to cultural studies scholars Tricia Rose, bell hooks, and Herbert Marcuse's student Angela Davis.

<sup>70</sup> The later continental thinker Hans-Georg Gadamer actually wanted to "transcend the aesthetic dimension" altogether, as he proposes in *Truth and Method* (2006: Continuum).

inclusion in Theodor W. Adorno's theoretical attempts at explaining the nature and beauty of "new music" production.

When considering the critical theorist's palate for, and reaction to, jazz sounds, philosopher Douglas Kellner writes that, "Adorno may well have heard some the "good stuff"-- or at least was familiar with discussions of it"<sup>71</sup>. For the authentic jazz connoisseur at this time, the "good stuff" was in fact "The New Thing"- the dissonant sounds of Ornette Coleman, Cecil Taylor, and John Coltrane. This aesthetic judgment was solidified when John Coltrane, with his myriad avant-garde albums in distribution domestically and abroad, was named "Jazz Musician of the Year" in 1965 (four years before the death of Adorno) by the idiom's authoritative trade magazine (*Downbeat*). Theodor W. Adorno, however, never wrote on "the new jazz" of John Coltrane, who had direct connections to the "cool jazz" of Miles Davis (the genre of which Adorno initially wrote off as both a superficial musical term and sound in the "Perennial Fashion-Jazz" essay of *Prisms*.)

As musician David S. Ware has remarked of the new jazz, "The music has deep roots." (1999, "Jazzskool"<sup>72</sup>) For instance, the avant-garde tenor saxophonist John Coltrane received his initial big break by performing in "cool" jazzman Miles Davis' Quintet<sup>73</sup>, and Davis was launched onto the jazz scene by his employment in bebopper Charlie Parker's Quintet<sup>74</sup>. In turn, Charlie Parker was born and raised in Kansas City,

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<sup>71</sup> Doug Kellner. "Jazz, Hip Hop Etc." [theory-frankfurt-school mailing list archive](http://theory-frankfurt-school mailing list archive). 1997. University of Utah, Retrieved 4 Apr. 2007 <<http://archives.econ.utah.edu/archives/theory-frankfurt-school/1997m08/msg00015.htm>>.

<sup>72</sup> Personal communication: January 2000. "Jazzskool" is a registered name of Knitmedia, Inc. New York, NY.

<sup>73</sup> To be historically accurate, some jazz scholars determine Coltrane's first big career break to be his work in the bebop 'big band' (and subsequently the Sextet) of Dizzy Gillespie.

<sup>74</sup> Frankfurt School-educated scholar Claus Offe, in his *Reflections on America: Tocqueville, Weber, and Adorno in the United States* (2005), documents that Theodor W. Adorno spent 1938-1941 in New York.

and was a product of, and reaction to, that city's "swing" jazz culture<sup>75</sup>. In Theodor W. Adorno's published work on Ludwig van Beethoven's "late style", he suggests that the chamber setting presented musicians fewer members to hide (their mistakes) behind. When John Coltrane pioneered the jazz quartet setting in 1961, the Heideggerian-informed theory of "de-concealment" was in full effect at the micro-level<sup>76</sup> - instead of there being two wind instrumentalists on the front line of the ensemble (each covering the other's occasional musical slipups), Coltrane stood alone and proclaimed in December of 1964's *A Love Supreme* that his music was all about honesty<sup>77</sup> - there were not any wrong notes to have been played (in principle). This is really not that all different Adorno's assault on the twentieth century metaphysical predicament of the Subject-Object distinction and how he considers objectivity as the inner-most kernel of subjectivity in *Negative Dialectics*.

The issue at hand, however, is that with the bevy of apparent philosophical issues involved with the particular new music's development, Theodor W. Adorno never "went on the record" and published any type of continental hermeneutic of avant-garde jazz, he simply dismissed it. In addition to publishing "Perennial Fashion-Jazz" in 1953, Adorno wrote a revealing essay titled "On the Contemporary Relationship between Music and

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This meant that the German musicologist was studying the jazz establishment in the same place and at the same time that bebop was invented. Theodor W. Adorno had only dismissive comments to make of bebop in "Perennial Fashion-Jazz" in 1953, four years after he left New York. The question is, however, would he have been equally dismissive of the avant-garde turn in jazz. Some of these 'new jazz' sounds were similar (in terms of dissonance) to the European string quartets that Adorno admired so much.

<sup>75</sup> Charlie Parker idolized Lester Young in his early days, and was invited as a youth to participate in a traditional Kansas City "jam session" by tenor saxophonist Don Byas.

<sup>76</sup> Theodor W. Adorno remarked about a structural shift from large orchestras to chamber music in general, John Coltrane made the structural shift within the chamber context by popularizing the quartet in place of the quintet as the archetypal musical unit for 'new jazz' production.

<sup>77</sup> This registers with American avant-garde aesthetics at the most fundamental level, for it was visual artist Jackson Pollock who remarked in Charlie Parker's era that there were "no mistakes" in his approach to painting. Pollock's aesthetic theory was pursued intensely by Ornette Coleman, who included the print "White Light" (1949) in the cover art of *Free Jazz* (December, 1960).

Philosophy” that gives the reader clues on why such a later twentieth century music philosophy was not pursued by the Frankfurt School scholar. The problem initially lies in the transatlantic issue of bridging two-hundred years of continental European intellectualism<sup>78</sup> with a removed, "de-aestheticized" American musical tradition. This tradition was less than a half-century old when Theodor W. Adorno sought the Philosophy-Music connection and attempting to critique its phenomenological core was something he as German intellectual refuted in his earliest training at the University of Frankfurt. Ornette Coleman's Neo-Kantian informed Husserlian tactics were something Theodor W. Adorno attempted to move beyond in his accepted Dissertation in Germany. Edmund Husserl attempted to eschew social conditions by bracketing them, whereas Theodor W. Adorno wanted to ontologize and internalize the social world which surrounded him. Social entities were "totalizing" in Adorno's interdisciplinary writings; avant-garde jazz was representative of instrumental societal forces. It did not have the grounds for new music analysis because its foundations lie in mass society.

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<sup>78</sup> Intellectualism, particular on the part of the composer, is studied in Theodor W. Adorno's *Philosophy of New Music* (2006). The context is high European intellectualism.

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