

The Relationships Between An Objectivity-Conditioned Language And the Present State of New Music

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Preface

*written in the generous pourings of wined nights,
and in the penny pinching mornings of the next day*
week of July 16, 1984
Urbana, Illinois

In writing this dissertation article, I imagine I am addressing a problem in the presence of friends. The problem?—I'll come to that in a moment. The friends?—the friends I divide into two groups. The first group, the enthusiastic supporters, who themselves produce music and their musical experiences, constitute a small circle of concerned composers and music listeners. Some of these friends are pessimistic over the problem; one is my old side-kick, the Grumbler, who speaks disparagingly of all my attempts only in order to save me from further disappointments; some friends with sweaty shiny brow are convinced that if only we would—, then finally we could—! All of us have spoken up and down in dismay; each of us, at some point, has taken the floor and found his or her eloquence over the dismaying problem:

that the new music that some of us write and that all of us curiously strain to listen to, brings on dull resentful faces outside our circle of listeners;

that the new music which was a twinkle in the composer's eye brings on a look of impatience, of belligerence, of contempt, of lonely hostility in listeners refusing to be listeners;

that the new music which had meant to be taken in and integrated as a friendly alien, is not taken in.

Nor are these listeners' objections to the music as varied and as eccentric and as individual as the listeners themselves. People rejecting listening don't say such things as "Darn! This new music makes me drop my question marks!" or, "New music? Only if it comes between my carrot and my lounge chair." or, "I eschew new music sundry in the garage sale." or, "New music? But I'm an episcopalian!" or, "New music? But I promised my wife I wouldn't anymore." Rather, there is a depressing sameness about the language and sequence of phrases which reject new music: "I don't like it / because / it / is chaotic, disorganized, ugly..."

I imagine I am also addressing a second group of people: those of our friends who are outside the "music producing" circle, listeners who work at linguistics, Spanish, women's studies, economics, electrical engineering, and who, while trying to listen to new music, have removed resentment from their faces out of affection for us, and who listen, looking to us, as though they were not capable themselves of hearing from the music.

"What to do?"

While in the midst of deploring the problem, a high-pitched voice amongst us burst the calm content of unified complaint: "What to do?"

Encourage ourselves to write "less difficult" music in hopes that the listeners might find themselves "less difficult"? This had already been tried! Each of us at different times had already dutifully or polemically or exhortingly gone "social" and tried to write less difficult music, which meant a music more familiar

and more resembling the old music known to our unhappy-listeners-refusing-to-be-listeners. We told each other that a new music might not have to pose a difficulty to listeners. But in the process of composing that new music which was also less difficult, there had occurred to each of us a certain moment when we had decided it was safe to tamper a bit with some old and hopelessly stultifying cliché, and New Music had resulted, almost in spite of ourselves! The moment we brought interest to the music, things became more difficult for the listener.

“What to do?”

The following article is a beginning answer. It was written in an attempt to put our analysis of the problem into a language we preferred. Composed over several nights, grog in hand, sitting in a walk-down beer cellar, O E.T.A. Hoffman! O Davidsbundlerblätter! we met and wrote, and wrote and then met.

O robin, o soraya, o michael, o elisa, o marina, o tracy, o pete—to these friends on the outside of the musical circle we wrote, with me the scribe at these meetings, to give these friends back the authority for their listening.

Introduction

Whereas new music is written by composers, its reputation and social significance are provided by people who are particularly *not* composers: textbook writers, magazine journalists, radio interviewers, and newspaper critics.

For most newspaper readers (and this goes for the audiences of radio, television, magazines, and textbooks as well), new music has become known by its reported dilemmas. Until the past few years, readers could read about a new music that was reported to be standing, on one foot, separated from its listeners by a “gap”. Little mention could be found of a new music that did not also mention its accompanying gap. Was this gap due to the music—its difficulties, its complexity, its little known points of departures? Or was the gap due to listeners—their old-fashioned expectations, their lack of education, their unquestioned desire for entertainment? Was it due to the music that listeners couldn’t talk about it? Or due to the listeners?

In the last few years new music is again reported to be in the midst of a dilemma, but a more recent one: new music has set its foot down, and is returning, or deciding not to return or flirting with the possibility of returning, to “tonality” (tonality being a way of organizing sounds that is familiar to all listeners). Return to Tonality, or not?!

These two Press-reported dilemmas overlap to leave a smudge which may be read, tea-leaves-like, for implications. A reading could tell us that the gap was indeed due to the music, since the first conciliatory move was made not by the listeners but by the music composers; that thus it was new music which had been preventing listeners from talking about it; and that by “returning to tonality” new music now shows its willingness to shrink the distance between itself and its listeners. The earlier gap dilemma is not phased out by the more recent “Return to Tonality” dilemma, but rather hovers as evidence of an “or else”: “return to tonality, or else...” is the gap’s message. Either new music returns to tonality, or else we’re returned to the gap.

In the following article, I, also, am concerned with the dilemmas which surround new music, and with the relationships between new music and listeners: what happens between new music and listeners? How does music affect listeners? And how do listeners affect new music, in a social world?

However, beyond this point, my analysis and specifications regarding the dilemmas of new music and listeners are in sideways opposition to the analysis advertized by the Press. My activities as a composer who finds that to write new music means I must also write its reputation, or at least combat its being slandered, lead me to act on a premise incompatible with the aims of mass media: that in a social world, things are what’s said about them.

In writing about the relationships between new music and listeners and gaps and returns, the news of this thesis is to expose and investigate an indispensable component of those relationships: language—the language that listeners speak and comment and mumble to themselves and copy from the newspapers; the language that newspapers write and will not refer to; and the language that I am using and will refer to.

Thus, I restate my topic: in this article I will concern myself with relationships between new music, listeners, and language. Much has been written and said about new music and listeners; little has been said about how what’s written and what’s said affects music and listeners. The history of music that we read of and speak of and refer to can be described as the history of the interactions between listeners, music, and language.

Two is company, three is a crowd!

It may appear that the point of this topic is that I am merely “adding” a component to the coupling of music and listeners, complicating an already complex picture. Is this all? No. Language marks the place where, and the time when, subject (listener) and object (music) meet. Language will mark that place whether we are aware of its dynamic presence, or not. I expose language’s presence with the aim of rescuing the presence of the others—music and listeners—not with the intention of overshadowing them but of bolstering them.

The problem I address is what happens to new music when it becomes the subject matter of present-day language.

The aspect I investigate concerns the objectivity-orientation of that language. I assert that present-day syntax, conditioned by the paradigm of objectivity, prevents language about music from bridging the gap between new music and listeners.

The context I provide is that context in which my proposal—the linkage of the present state of new music with the present state of language—will be seen as necessary, and in which the listener will have sufficient background to understand the assertion: the current state of new music is related to its treatment under an objectivity-conditioned language.

The references I make are to recent theories, insights, and investigations from the worlds of cybernetics, linguistics, cognitive studies, systems analysis—writings which contribute to my analysis of the relations between music, listeners, and language.

This article is played out on the stage of the “said-about” (introduced in Part One)—that which has been said about new music and listeners. Whether there “is” a gap between new music and listeners, or not, does not concern us; but that “it has been said” that there exists a gap and that, having been said, the saying has had consequences (in a social world, things are what’s said about them)—this is the scene in which we first find ourselves.

Part One: The Scene of the Said-Abouts

In order to understand what is said about the present state of new music by the Press, it will be useful if we understand a bit of what could be said, by a composer, of the events that constitute the history of music in the last eighty years.

What's said about new music by a composer

From the 17th century until the 20th century, composers wrote pieces that both relied on and developed a system of organized pitches that we now call the “tonal system”. The diversity of the composers’ efforts within this system was enormous: the tune *Yankee Doodle Dandy* is based on the system, as is Tchaikovsky’s Fifth Symphony. Key signatures, major and minor scales, and harmonic progressions signal the presence of this system. A distinguishing constraint of the tonal system is the hierarchical organization of pitches: the function of every pitch is defined by its relation to a central or main pitch. For the listener, this hierarchical organization has several important functions: for instance, a listener will recognize quite clearly whether a piece has ended or not. The variety of ways that pieces end is a result of the skill of composers to retard the inevitability of this recognition; however, that the end of a piece is recognizable is not a matter of composition, but rather is dictated by the hierarchical organization of pitches—only certain predesignated sequences of pitches can signal the end of the composition. The ingenuity of composers to make yet another surprising event within the constraints of this system is evident if we pass our mind’s ear over the accumulation of tonal music compositions: all have in common the tonal organization, and yet are quite distinguishable from one another.

Around 1900 an important shift in compositional thinking occurred—a shift that eighty years later, in 1985, is still news to most audiences. We can deduce from the letters, writings, articles, and music written by composers at that time that many composers around 1900 were no longer attempting to compose pieces that developed and relied on the tonal system.

Another composer, Herbert Brün, describes it:

Most contemporary composers agree with the public (though not in the choice of terminology) that our time has produced some trends in music which constitute, to the meaning of the word music, a revolution far greater and far more incisive than any of the many historic precedents. It seems that something which basically had not been challenged for hundreds of years, and in consequence was taken for granted, cannot be taken for granted any longer. That which apparently is meant by this “something” can be described, only vaguely, as being the potential information value contained in the musical patterns which all musical events have the tendency to form within time.

Herbert Brün
Against Plausibility

The tonal system ceased to be the assumed total universe of music. Rather, investigations were made into developing and relying on other systems.

What's said about new music by the Press

So far I have presented what has been said by a composer concerning this revolution in music. However, music, we are told, is the composite of two stories: the story of the composer's attempt, and the story of the listener's response. How did listeners respond? The main documentation, if not the creation of the listeners' responses, occurs within the music criticism section of the Press. So we reformulate the question: how did the Press, in the name of its readers, respond to this revolution?

Chronicles of music criticism of all centuries show us sentences upon sentences of evidence that music critics greet the production of the new music of their time with contempt, and not with a *lack* of understanding, but rather with an abundance of the wrong understanding. While new art calls into question old channels of communication (of which the Press is one), the Press is able to maintain its superiority to that question by measuring the new with old and status-quo-backed standards:

Bela Bartók has done it. He has achieved one of the greatest desires of the modernists, in turning things upside down. He has made big music sound small. . . He has converted the grand orchestra into a mere mandolin. . . He has gone after beauty with hammers and sticks. In time, the object doubtless will be even better attained. If not Bartók, then someone else will compel a 120-man orchestra, everybody blowing, scraping, and smiting at full bent, to sigh as thinly as a rubbed goblet and to twang as faintly as a jews harp. For out go not only melody and harmony, but also the timbre of the violin, the volume of the trombone, and the shading of the piano.

Harold Norton
Christian Science Monitor
February 16, 1928

Additionally, in *this* century, we find a development of something which had not existed in "all" centuries: in tandem with the development of the power of the Press, occurred the development of a vocabulary used internationally among music critics. The same clichés and terms used by a music critic in Italy were to be found in the newspaper's arts section in Germany or France.

Into this pool of critics' vocabulary entered new music and triggered this internationally consolidated Press to respond in a way it had not yet done before. Not content to pinion new music with disapproving adjectives, which had before been the custom (new music being ugly or chaotic or disorganized), critics reached into their dislike of new music, and pulled out a "gap". They turned their reaction to new music into an object, a thing: The Gap. This reification of their response to new music has left us with a scenario of the music on one side, the listener on the other, and in the middle, this mysterious presence called The Gap. The term, "the gap", is not investigated in the Press: its negative value is assumed.

Following are three stages of the scene of the said-about: how the Press has told its story of new music over three time periods: early 60's, early 70's, and the present.

What's said by the Press: 1960's

From an article in the early 60's, appearing in *The Milwaukee Times*, we read:

NEW MUSIC DRIVES AWAY AUDIENCES

Yesterday evening the Milwaukee Symphony Orchestra skillfully presented a program of essentially old favorites. However, even this gifted orchestra was unable to prevent the massive exodus of the audience that occurred during the performance of a piece of "avant-garde" music, *Htology*, by Lon Fountain, a Chicago composer. The piece had been preceded by a masterful and moving performance of Tchaikovsky's Fourth Symphony, and perhaps had been programmed to follow this inspired classic in the interests of contrast. If so, then contrast there was: after the rich, lush sound of the mournful Russian masterpiece, the rattling disharmony and thin wails that issued from the Fountain piece proved such a contrast that the opening of the "music" was covered by laughter and hisses from the audience. Though the orchestra energetically tried its best to instill some grace into this music, even it was unable to shrink the by now proverbial gap that such pieces create between themselves and audiences.

The Milwaukee Times
May 6, 1963

What's said by the Press: 1970's

The next said-about arrives on a stage set essentially the same as before: the Press continues its production of language about new music; the international consolidation of newspaper language still exists; the object of the newspaper language is still the composer's persistent attempt to write music that is not familiar. There is one change: the "gap", that creation of the Press, is reported to have consequences on the current generation of young composers:

Young composers today are looking for a style. For some years now there has been the general realization that almost three decades of the non-tonal music practiced in international circles have led to nowhere. It may be true that elements of the language have penetrated the vocabulary of all composers. It is also true that none of the music created during that period has entered the active repertory.

New music composers have had their chance. It was not as though they were working in a vacuum. They kept insisting that if only the public had a chance to immerse itself in their music, then the music would eventually make its way. It was a potent lobby that they ran. For years the international public was exposed to the new music. Every orchestra played its share and often there were festivals of the avant-garde. Records by the thousands were issued. There was tremendous activity. Yet the public stubbornly resisted. It was not a matter of exposure; the music achieved rather wide currency for a while. But there was something in the totally organized, totally dissonant, a-thematic product that proved completely antithetic to the public.

Harold Schonberg
New York Times, September 12, 1972

What's said by the Press: 1984

The last and most recent “said-about” takes us to 1984 and the “Return to Tonality” slogans. The following example is consistent with the story the Press has reported, and appears as a response and almost a conclusion to the Press-reported dilemmas of the two previous scenes:

CAN COMPOSERS REGAIN THEIR AUDIENCES?

Add Jacob Druckman to the list of American composers currently in full flight from academic serialism, and quite voluble about it. It almost seems *de rigueur* these days for a composer to issue a manifesto to the effect that he will have nothing to do with the bad old days. The very fact that he has disavowed totally organized music and all its offshoots, and spoken in favor of a return to his tonal roots, makes him still another of that large band unhappy with the music of the immediate past and very concerned about its future. Mr. Druckman has said that the next direction for new music composers is to write music both new *and* beautiful—and that points us back to tonality.

Harold Schonberg
New York Times
August 14, 1984

Part Two: The Body

Introduction

To link a discussion of new music to a discussion of an “objectivity-subjectivity conditioned language” is to make a leap—not a step, nor a logical conclusion, but a leap. This leap requires an understanding of the company it keeps: other leaps, which bolster it and whose connections with it and with one another suggest the beginning of a paradigmatic shift concerning cognitive notions.

Both describing and listening are cognitive acts: moments of a subject wanting to know about an object. What’s said about describing and listening is based on certain established models of cognition. Here I will present a cognitive model recently proposed by Humberto Maturana, a cybernetician and neurophysiologist. The model breaks with past models and presents an entirely different story of the moment of subject meeting object. I’ll speak of the model in five statements and comments about the statements, and then open onto a grand discussion of the model (pages 12–13). Using this model as point of departure, I’ll make a tip-toed path through notions about objectivity-subjectivity, language, and listening. This path structurally snowballs: the first section on objectivity-subjectivity is built after the model (pages 13–14); the section on language is built according to what has been said about objectivity-subjectivity and the model (pages 14–16); the third section on listening is built on what has been said about language, objectivity-subjectivity, and the model (pages 17–18).

I cannot, in the following, claim scientific knowledge or self-referential language. All I claim is that my reports and investigations should contribute to a fresh clarification of the issues.

Model to inform the discussion: statements, comments, and discussion

Statement 1: Living systems, of which cognitive systems are one example, can be described as open to energy, and closed to information and control.

Statement 2: Studying the organization of a system “closed to information and control, open to energy” (a closed system) is studying the nature of its self-reference.

Statement 3: Living systems are autopoietic systems.

Statement 4: A system that is closed to information and control is not closed to interaction.

Statement 5: Cognition is a subject-dependent phenomenon: as a process it is constitutively bound to the organization and structure of the knower, because all the states and interactions in which the knower can enter are determined by her organization and structure.

Statement 1: Living systems, of which cognitive systems are one example, can be described as open to energy, and closed to information and control.

Comment: A description which states that a living system is “closed to information and control” is a description which is positing a new notion of a living system. This living system is one whose parts are organized in a circular form, that is, every part interacts with every other part. Intuitively, we understand

such mutual interactions in a whole system: for example, if I try to understand how my brain interacts with my liver, I know right away that it is not that my brain acts on my liver in hierarchical form but also that my liver acts simultaneously on my brain. However, beyond this intuitive understanding, the statement of the closure of a system has radical consequences. It enables us to understand our nervous system not as an input-output information processing device (as is the current understanding in neurophysiology), but rather as a *closed* unit of perception and action maintaining internally generated levels. The idea is that the organization's stability (its "homeostasis") produces certain levels to be maintained, with the nervous system compensating to maintain those internally generated levels in the face of perturbations. We speak of homeostasis when we speak of the first command of a living system, which is to refer to itself. Behavior becomes the compensation for those perturbations. "Perception", in this context, means the organism's view of whatever impinges on it. And its view is precisely dependent upon the reference levels it is set up to maintain, rather than on an externally defined "stimulus" that is to be "processed" as defined by an external agent. Perturbation can be external or can arise internally from the organism itself.

Within the vocabulary of a closed system, the terms "perturbation" and "compensation" are used rather than the terms "input" and "output". Input and output, terms that are used in the stimulus-response model, carry the connotation of something arising in the design of a system. When I put my coin into the Coke machine, I know that it is designed to receive that input, and no other input. But if I call my dog "Fido" and he comes to me, it is not because he was designed for me to call him "Fido" or anything else—he was not designed, he just "does his thing". The basic difference between input-output and perturbation-compensation is that one puts emphasis on the design for a thing, and the other puts emphasis on the stability arising from the closure of its organization.

Statement 2: Studying the organization of a system "closed to information and control, open to energy" (a closed system) is studying the nature of its self-reference.

Comment: The concept of self-reference is best understood if we imagine that a system is stable when all its parts react to all its parts to either maintain or restore a balance between its parts. The balance of a system is monitored by its self-reference. A perturbation, either from the inside or the outside, generates nothing else but this attempt to restore stability.

A self-referential system is distinct from an allo-referential system in that the allo-referential system is designed to respond to the perturbation, to "rise to the occasion", to react under the input: which is equivalent to information processing.

Statement 3: Living systems are autopoietic systems.

Comment: "Autopoiesis" is a special case of homeostasis in which the system's critical variable that is held constant is that system's own organization. An autopoietic system is defined as a unity by a network of productions. The production network produces the components; the components, through their interactions, constitute the system as a unity in the space in which they exist, and make the network possible by defining and realizing its topology. Thus the phenomenology of autopoiesis is the phenomenology of autonomy insofar as the result of the system's dynamics is the system itself.

Statement 4: A system that is closed to information and control is not closed to interaction.

Comment: Having established the closure of a living system, we may now ask: how does a closed system interact with other closed systems? We can say that two closed systems undergo a process of "coupling". What we do with the closure of a system is actually what we do all the time, i.e., we interact with a system

by poking at it, throwing sticks at it, shouting at it, etc., in various degrees of sophistication. That is a perturbation of the stability of a system, for which it will compensate or will not compensate. If it does compensate, then we can sense in it a stability for that interaction. So if each time I say “Fido” my dog comes around, that “Fido” is a perturbation in its organization that produces a compensation, i.e., the locomotion of coming to me.

A system interacting with another system is “system dependent” in that its behavior will depend on its organization; the system is “observer dependent” in that it will respond to the kind of perturbation that the other system throws at it. Therefore, if I am interacting with another closed system, my ability to see what its properties are *is* limited by what kinds of interactions I can have with it. As we will see later, one of the kinds of interactions I can have is the language I speak.

Statement 5: Cognition is a subject-dependent phenomenon: as a process it is constitutively bound to the organization and structure of the knower, because all the states and interactions in which the knower can enter are determined by her organization and structure.

In lieu of commenting on this important statement, I will open the floor to a grand discussion of what has been said so far.

Discussion of model

(homage and godspeed to the retreating backs and reproachful faces of an objectivity-ridden subjectivity)

Cognition is the story of subject meeting object.

Any discussion of “to know” needs must raise the question of what characterizes and constitutes the domain of the knower (the subject) and the domain of the to-be-known (the object)—the answers to be told in a vocabulary that traces the society’s current state of knowledge and of self-consciousness.

While most of us seem not to actively participate in these answers and questions, we do actively participate in the vocabulary, the metaphors, and imagery, which both produce and reproduce our society’s “state of the art” in relation to these answers and questions.

Maturana’s radical point of departure from traditional models lies in the the characterization of a living system as being *closed*—closed to information and control, open to energy. The workings of a closed system—the inter-activity between parts, its self-referentiality, its autopoiesis—give us an image of how the system maintains itself.

The story we tell of our *observations*—of the dog who comes when its name is called, of the person who moves in order to get out of the way of a car—is only the story of *our* observations. Maturana proposes that the first command of a living system is to refer to self in order to maintain itself (its homeostasis), and is a command whose *consequences* we observe. To be consistent with Maturana, we must re-see what we see, and tell to our eyes a newer image: of the dog who comes when we call in order to maintain its homeostasis, and not *because* we called. Thus, if we reflect on the old vocabulary and imagery of our notions of a living system responding to its environment, we can observe their implication: movements of a living system are considered effects of which something in the environment is the cause. Contrary to this, under Maturana’s model, it is the living system which causes its own effect—it is the living system’s

response to itself that we have, up to now, called its response to the environment.

Objectivity-Subjectivity and links with cognitive model

Maturana's characterization of a living system affects our discussion of new music's treatment under a subjectivity-objectivity conditioned language in three ways: in our understanding of the notions of objectivity-subjectivity; language; and music listening (as an instance of cognition).

While cognition is the story told of subject meeting object, it also taps the same pool of imagery, vocabulary, and concepts as does the story of objectivity-subjectivity: they each tell the other's story.

In the traditional model, the objectivity-subjectivity dualism (that which existed prior to Maturana's model) is both a notion and a dynamic active in the old paradigm of cognition. The notion's neurophysiological statement is:

We obtain knowledge through our sense organs by a process of mapping the objective external reality onto our nervous system, accommodating our behavior to the structure of the world revealed through this mapping.

A more general statement of this notion of objectivity is:

We exist in an objective world that can be known and about which we can make cognitive statements that reveal it as an independent reality whose validity is, therefore, independent from us as observers.

In the imagery which reproduces this old concept of cognition and the role played in it by objectivity-subjectivity, perceiver and perceived are each given a particular place: the perceived (reality, truth) dominates, while the perceiver is a vessel, a receptacle, a repository that either adequately or inadequately receives the perceived. "Reality" plays the dominant role, and must be pursued; the perceiver plays a passive role. In this picture, reality stands firm, regardless of description, and the importance of language is passed over, language being considered depictional, and not consequential. Language is either taken for granted and is, thus, invisible; or is mentioned, but only as an interference, a smudge on the windowpane between perceiver and perceived: "but for the words getting in the way, I would have been able to finally see truth, reality."

Under Maturana's model, cognition is returned to the subject. The model criticizes the notion that we can have cognitive access to an objective reality *independent* of us as observers, and rather posits cognition as "a process that is constitutively bound to the organization and structure of the knower because all the states and interactions in which the knower can enter are determined by her organization and structure".

In Maturana's picture, perceiver and perceived are given dynamically different places. The perceived becomes dependent on the perceiver, the profile of the perceiver is raised, and cognizance is given to the perceiver's mode of interacting with the perceived: her language.

Cognition, we have said, is the story of subject meeting object. And who tells the story? Under Maturana's model, we can answer: the story is told by a subject and is told by the telling. The knower's ability to

see and speak of an “it” is limited to the kinds of interactions she can have with it, and dominant amongst these interactions is her language.

Philosophers, psychologists, and biologists have on many diverse occasions argued that the act of cognition is somehow bound to the knower—so a criticism of the notion that we have cognitive access to an objective reality is not new. Unfortunately, philosophers and scientists generally fear that recognizing cognition as a subject dependent phenomenon leads to idealism and solipsism. I think that this should not be the case and that there are two basic sources to this fear:

1. It is difficult for us as Western thinkers to imagine cognition as a subject dependent phenomenon because we live immersed in a denotative linguistic domain in which even subjective notions are expressed denotatively, as if their existence were independent of us as observers;
2. It seems that a biological mechanism that gives rise to an observer with a subject dependent cognitive domain in which he uses a denotative language with manipulative success is a paradox, and hence, impossible.

Humberto Maturana
Cognitive Strategies

Maturana’s model questions the objectivity-subjectivity imagery of a real world which sends waves over us, marks us so that we utter it, sprays us until we see it, hides itself so that we must look for it, masks itself so that we are tricked into making false statements about it, and reveals itself so that we come, at last, nearer to the truth. As Maturana’s model is new, we do not yet have sufficient imagery and language for it; but, as a first attempt, the poetry of the old objectivity-bound imagery might be tumbled around: we might imagine a subject who sends waves over the reality, who marks it so that what it tells is an utterance of herself, and who sprays reality until it sees her.

The shift of paradigm—the leap—moves from “The observer shall not enter into the description” to “The description shall reveal the properties of the observer.”

Thus it should be mentioned here that in this paper the terms objectivity and subjectivity do not denote opposites, but rather differently emphasized aspects of one relation, namely the relation between subject and object. I indicate this link between objectivity and subjectivity by means of a hyphen: for example, I speak of the “objectivity-subjectivity conditioning of language,” or “objectivity-subjectivity imagery”.

Language, and links with objectivity-subjectivity and cognitive model

When linguists became able to examine critically and scientifically a large number of languages of widely different patterns, their base of reference was expanded; they experienced an interruption of phenomena hitherto held universal, and a whole new order of significances came into their ken. It was found that the background linguistic system (in other words, the grammar) of each language is not merely a reproducing instrument for voicing ideas but rather is itself the shaper of ideas, the program and guide for the individual’s mental activity, for his

analysis of impressions, for his synthesis of this mental stock in trade. Formulation of ideas is not an independent process, strictly rational in the old sense, but is part of a particular grammar, and differs, from slightly to greatly, between different grammars. We dissect nature along lines laid down by our native languages. The categories and types that we isolate from the world of phenomena we do not find there because they stare every observer in the face; on the contrary, the world is presented in a kaleidoscopic flux of impressions which has to be organized by our minds—and this means largely by the linguistic systems in our minds. We cut nature up, organize it into concepts, and ascribe significances as we do, largely because we are parties to an agreement to organize it in this way—an agreement that holds throughout our speech community and is codified in the patterns of our language. . . . And it will be found that it is not possible to define “event, thing, object, relationship” and so on, from nature, but that to define them always involves a circuitous return to the grammatical categories of the definer’s language.

Benjamin Lee Whorf
Language, Thought, and Reality

To paraphrase Roland Barthes: there is no primary, naive, phenomenal understanding of the field data which we afterwards have to explicate or intellectualize. No ethnographer is innocent. We begin with the narrative in our head which structures our initial observations in the field.

In the process of production of ethnography we are continually oriented toward the dominant narrative structure. We go to the reservation with a story already in mind, and that story is foregrounded in the final professional product, the published article, chapter, or monograph. If we depart too far from the dominant story in the literature, if we overlook a key reference or fail to mention the work of an important scholar, we are politely corrected by such institutional monitors as the thesis committee, the foundation review panel, the editors of our journals, or the sometimes heavy hand of the program committee at our annual meetings. At the beginning and at the end, the production of ethnography is framed by the dominant story. Most of the time there is a balance to research innovation; the study is new enough to be interesting but familiar enough so that the story remains recognizable. There are geniuses—Bateson did publish *Naven* in 1936—but usually, we define research with reference to the current narrative and report back our particular variation of that narrative to our colleagues, most of whom already know the plot structure in advance. The process is self-reinforcing and confirms everyone’s view of the world.

Edward Bruner
Ethnography as Narrative

Language is prepared for so and so many registrerings. You may perceive everything but the preference for what you register is guided by what language you have. This in turn suggests that by rejuvenating the language, the registering selected from the perceived will be guided by new preferences.

Herbert Brün
Seminar in Experimental Composition

A recurrent phenomenon in language is a phenomenon that could be described as the “inertia of language”:

this means that what present language stores and sends as messages, it learned from many a previous, now obsolete, knowledge. Language argues paradigms, both those paradigms we now recognize as paradigms, and those we have yet to recognize as paradigms. Dynamically, its greatest power is held by a paradigm not while it is called “paradigm” but called facts, data, truth, nature, ethics, proper procedures, etc. As soon as a paradigm is called a “paradigm” (usually then referred to as a “mere” paradigm), its power collapses. Thus, a speaker may find her language at odds with her intentions, particularly if she is intending to add to the present store of knowledge, or attempting to negate some accepted idea, or trying to proceed along with neglected thoughts: for there will be a time lag, and a paradigm lag, between the intentions of the speaker, and the intentions of the language.

... it will be impossible to reason him out of these beliefs. He will assert them as plain, hard-headed common sense, which means that they satisfy him because they are completely adequate as a system of communication between him and his fellow men. That is, they are adequate linguistically to his social needs, and will remain so until an additional group of needs is felt and worked out in language.

Benjamin Lee Whorf
Language, Thought, and Reality

The inertia of language can also be termed its “closure”. Those characteristics of living systems as described by Maturana can be used to characterize language, characterizing the relations between describer, description, and described. These relations exhibit interactivity, self-referentiality, and autopoiesis. A speaker will speak about what she sees; what she sees will be determined by what she can speak about: this is an instance of interactivity and self-referentiality between describer, described, and description. The autopoiesis of language—when a dynamic of a system becomes a component of it—occurs in the above descriptive instance when a description will so orient the process of describing as to create the description.

In the third statement quoted above, Brün has made a useful distinction—the distinction between perceiving and registering enables him to refer to that moment which our present language can barely express: the moment when an I meets an it. In answer to the querulous “then if language determines so much, is what’s out there only what I describe it to be?” Brün ascribes to the it, its moment: the moment of perceiving; and ascribes to the I, I’s moment: the moment of registering. We *perceive* a phenomenon; what we *register* of it is dependent on the capabilities of the language used. The registrations of our language (its capabilities), are socially informed and are produced by, and are reproducing, paradigms. We may speak of the relationship between language and paradigm autopoietically: paradigms orient the describing process and become themselves components of that process; by becoming components of that process, they orient the describing process; and so on.

The phenomenon of describing, invisible under the notions of objectivity and subjectivity, becomes visible under Maturana’s cognitive model and the above statements. Thus to the statement that a description reveals the properties of the describer, we can add: that a description also reveals the properties of the describing language.

To the degree that a speaker is unaware of the power of her describing language, to that degree will language exercise its greatest power over her.

Listening process, linked with language, objectivity-subjectivity, and the cognitive model

I propose the following description of the listening process:

while a composer makes the music composition, it is the listener who makes the effect of the music. The composer provides the listener with an offer—the musical composition. The listener creates an image of the music, and responds to the created image, creating its effect. To use the old vocabulary of cause and effect: it is then the listener who creates the cause and the listener who creates the effect.

We can break down the listening process into these states:

1. the composer makes a musical composition which reaches the listener's ear; at this point the listener is on the job, and the composer can do no more;
2. now the listener makes her "experience" of the music—this consists of the listener finding or inventing those wishes and questions for which *this* music means fulfillment and answer;
3. the listener then looks at the wishes and questions which she had to contribute in order to make the composition a fulfillment and an answer. She now decides whether she likes her new acquisitions or whether she dislikes them. This is what produces the effect which listening to music has on the listener.

Listening is an instance of the cognitive process. The vocabulary generally used to characterize and to explain the listening experience stems from a well-known and frequently exploited store of more or less metaphorical expressions: people speak of being moved by the music, affected by the music; people say that the music did or didn't reach them, that the music left them cold or made chills go up their spine. These expressions subscribe to the notion of objectivity presented on page 13: "We obtain knowledge through our sense organs by a process of mapping the objective knowledge onto our nervous system, accommodating our behavior to the structure of the world revealed through this mapping."

It is this objectivity orientation which is the point of address and attack in the above description of the listening process. Objectivity wishes to characterize the listener as "open"—open to music—and as a vessel, into whom the music pours and who may then comment on the agreeability or disagreeability of that which was poured. Objectivity once again makes no mention of language or of the descriptive relations between listener, her language, and music. The listener's language, in the objectivity-oriented notions about the listening process, happens only after the experience: the music descends, the listener can only say whether she likes or dislikes it.

From appearances, we observe that music seems to "affect" listeners—so far, the objectivity notion accounts for this appearance. However, as in the context of the remarks about closure, we find that the situation that reaches the observer's *eye*—that of a dog coming in response to a call, or the listener being moved in response to the music—is only the situation that reaches the *observer's eye*.

In my description of the listening process, I reject this objectivity-oriented description of the listening process and characterize the listener as "closed". What goes on within that closure (steps 2 and 3 of the

listening process presented on page 17) does not tell the story of music affecting listener, but rather does tell of an active listener affecting the story of music.

In addition to asserting the closure of the listener I also claim there is a closure of the description process. The listener actively produces her experience of the music by bringing in her wishes and desires. Through the articulation of these wishes and desires she is setting the stage for her interaction with the music, and thus with this particular set of wishes and desires she will hear something and will react to what she hears within the context of those staked out wishes and desires. If she says she is in quest of “beautiful music”, then the music she hears will appear as an applicant for the fulfillment of that wish. The listener will then react to that wish and to the appropriateness of the applicant appearing as the fulfillment of that wish. The suitability of the applicant for the position will cause the listener’s emotional response to the music she hears and will condition her statements of like and dislike. Under this picture we can see that the capabilities of her registering language, socially conditioned to the degree that she is unaware of this conditioning, will “interview” what she is perceiving and act as a measuring standard to the perceived.

This picture of the listener is consistent with the statements from Maturana’s model of cognition, objectivity-subjectivity, and language: a listener is not “open” to an objective reality called “the music”; the listener’s language is not “open” to the music, serving as a mapping vehicle for it. Rather, both listener and language can “respond to the music” only via a subroutine: the closure of listener and language.

The poetry for this picture of a listener is one of the listener who affects the music, who reaches the music, who sends chills up its spine, who moves the music.

At present our society abounds in images and vocabulary surrounding the word “to affect” in which all but the listener is dominant and active. The field of psycho-acoustics, which intends to study the relations between sound and listeners, ends up describing itself as the study of the effects of sound on listeners, and not the study of the effects of listeners on sound. The notion of cause and effect is a particular locus around which notions of objectivity swarm: it causes, I am affected.

Part Three: What happens to new music when it becomes subject matter of an objectivity-oriented language?

Introduction

The question which acted as point of departure for our excursion into the area of “What’s said about new music” and the area of “Cognitive models” was the question:

What happens to new music when it becomes subject matter of an objectivity-oriented language?

These two areas provide a background for our point of arrival: that there exists a relationship—frequently causal, not always rational, certainly intuitively perceptible—between a crisis in the language about music, and a crisis in the relations between new music and audience (the “gap”, the “Return to Tonality”). It is due to the music, the Press has reported, that we can’t talk about it; it is due to the language about music, I say, that we can’t talk about it. I propose that:

Present-day syntax, conditioned by the powerful concepts of objectivity-subjectivity, prevents our language from bridging the gap between new music and audience.

The following pages take this proposal apart: first the phrase “present-day syntax, conditioned by the powerful concepts of objectivity-subjectivity” is given evidence (pages 19–22); and then the last part, “the gap between new music and audience”, is fleshed out (pages 22–23). The pages following those, reassemble the proposal (pages 23–24) and re-tell the story of the “Gap” and the “Return to Tonality” (pages 24–28).

Taking apart the proposal: “the objectivity-oriented language”

So far I have mentioned the effects that objectivity has on our perceived relationships, and how these relationships have been consistent with the scientific view of neural perception. How does language produce and reproduce the concept of objectivity? Is there any evidence to be found in the language, that our present-day syntax is conditioned by the concepts of objectivity-subjectivity?

Recall that a general statement of objectivity is: “We exist in an objective world that can be known and about which we can make cognitive statements that reveal it as an independent reality whose validity is, therefore, independent from us as observers”. Based on this, I have divided evidence of objectivity-orientation into seven areas of observation: imagery, object affecting subject, objective gestures of the syntax, relations-predicate confusion, ex post facto existence, adjectives, and invisibility of language.

Imagery

The music didn’t reach me.
I was moved by the music.

The images in these sentences produce and reproduce a relationship between perceiver and perceived in which the perceiver sees herself as a vessel, with reality (the perceived) playing the dominant role and the perceiver a passive role. Note that when the subject of the sentence is the perceiver, the verb is passive; when “it” (the music) acts as subject, the verb is active. Fun and games result when we make a passive-active voice switch:

The music wasn’t reached by me.
I was moving the music.

Object affecting subject

The music made me feel happy.
The music put me in a peaceful mood.

Ironically, an objectivity-oriented language treats the perceiver, who is a cognitive subject, as an object: the passive receiver who is affected by the object; and it attributes to the perceived, the activities of a subject: it moves, it causes, it puts people in moods. The image of who is doing and who is being done to is a hot seat of the describer-description-described dilemma.

Objective gestures of the syntax

Language offers a lot of initial withdrawals, such as:

It seems to be ...
It appears that ...
It has been said ...
I guess ...
The truth of the matter is, of course ...
Naturally ...

and many more, all of which hint at unquestioned assumptions with regard to unquestioned notions such as subjectivity (to be apologetically conceded), objectivity (that’s where true judgement lies), truth (helplessly delivered to integrity).

Substituting “music” for “it” in the above list moves us on toward the language which attempts to describe music “objectively”:

The music opens with a timpani roll, followed by a horn solo ...
The first movement consisted of three episodes of equal length ...

This language apes scientificness by reducing music to its parts.

Relations-Predicate confusion

The music didn't make sense.
The music was chaotic.
The piece wasn't very good.

While in more reflective moments we may admit that the qualities of sense, order, chaos, goodness, refer to a relationship between perceiver and perceived, still, available syntax will lead us to consider these qualities as properties of the perceived. As Heinz von Foerster writes:

Confusing relations with predicates has become a political pastime. In the proposition "spinach is green" green is a predicate; in "spinach is good" good is a relation between the chemistry of spinach and the observer who tastes it. He may refer to his relation to spinach as "good". Our mothers, who are the first politicians we encounter, make use of the semantic ambiguity of the syntactic operator "is" by telling us "spinach is good" as if they were to say "spinach is green".

Heinz von Foerster
The Perception of the Future and the Future of Perception

The syntax "It didn't make sense" attributes sense to what the it makes. Even the slight improvement "It didn't make sense to me" still projects the image that sense is made by the it, the I being an object of this operation who merely recognizes the sense (or lack of it) that already exists in the music.

Ex post facto existence

The music made me feel happy.

This syntax, in addition to placing the music as subject, and listener as object, also places the listener in a particular time frame with regard to the music: the listener happens afterwards. The syntax ascribes to the music an existence preceding the listener and her description of her feelings.

Objectivity posits language as being depictive—language reflects reality, reports on what's going on. Accordingly, speakers also carry a self-image of being depictees, reporters of the action that has already happened, and has happened elsewhere. To speak is to come after the event.

Hence, under the paradigm of objectivity, to listen and to speak are both activities coming afterwards. The moment of autonomy of the listener—her subjectivity—is an "after the fact" existence, when she is taking the only liberty allowed her under objectivity: articulating whether she liked the music which has happened to her.

Adjectives

It was too long.
It's very cerebral.

It isn't very beautiful.
The music was extremely agitated sounding.
The second section was very lush.

When speakers juxtapose language to music, they frequently bring to music an ominous, discouraging, uninspired plethora of adjectives. Or, they bring a plethora of adjectives. What do adjectives do? Adjectives function like a switch: they call attention away from the noun, while taking for granted the knowledge of the noun and the existence of what the noun names. Thus the use of adjectives assumes the music, and prevents an investigation of what is the "it" (the music). Further, the adjective modifies not the listener, nor the listener and the music ("we were beautiful"), but the music: the moment of autonomy of the listener is attributed to the listened-to.

Invisibility of language (They don't know it, but they use it.)

If we peruse the language taken to task under the foregoing observations, we notice that whereas the perceiver is rarely mentioned, the language of the perceiver is never mentioned. Under objectivity, the cognitive act of listening is something which occurs only between subject and object—a two-element system, quasi speechless.

A property of objectivity is that it removes language from the visibility of speakers and listeners. With language represented as mere vehicle of thought, neither speaker nor listener are made aware, by that language or by that representation, of language's existence as a dynamic, as a producer. Made unaware of language's existence, they are then left unaware of the paradigm this language argues: objectivity. A magic trick! That which conditions the situation—objectivity—also provides the means for its concealment. The paradigm renders the language invisible, and the invisibility of the language renders the paradigm invisible. In this linguistic situation oriented by an objectivity-ridden language, speakers and listeners are excluded from access to the paradigm in that they are excluded from access to the language.

Taking apart the proposal: "gap between new music and audience"

The purpose of new music is to endow acoustical events with a sense which the acoustical material in itself would not possess, and which can be perceived by an audience as a communication of contemporary relevance and significance about usually abstract visions and movements in the human mind.

Herbert Brün
Against Plausibility

In addition to telling us what new music proposes, the above statement implies what new music does *not* propose—new music does not propose to endow acoustical events with a *familiar* sense. Rather, acoustical elements are linked in unfamiliar ways. Aware that these links are new and not yet easily recognizable to listeners, the composer repeats the links, emphasizes and bolsters them—she makes a context from a consistent treatment of the links.

What is familiar to us now—the relations of harmony, melody, and so on—at one time were themselves a treatment of acoustical materials sounding unfamiliar to the listener's ear. By now, however, their newness

has been absorbed by the ear, their unfamiliar links have become familiar, and their propositions of what music is to become no longer are considered “propositions” but rather solid evidence of what music is.

New music (or, *now* music) arrives into this state of affairs. It not only confronts the notions of what music is, it also confronts the listener who carries these notions in her language. Language has learned from the by-now very old compositional ideas of melody, harmony, etc. what music “is”, what particular connections the listener is to listen for, what vocabulary is to be consulted, and what wishes and expectations the listener is to have of her listening experience.

A reminder: as described earlier, a listener brings to music an image which she has created of it, this image consisting of wishes and desires for what she wants music to be, articulated in the language available to her, and she will react to what she hears within the context of those wishes. For her, the music will appear as a kind of “candidate” for the fulfillment of those wishes and desires, and its suitability for that candidacy will determine the listener’s response to the music. Thus the capabilities of the listener’s language will interview what she is perceiving, and act as a measuring standard to the perceived.

Language cannot change itself. It will continue to interrogate any acoustical event which comes its way in the terms it has learned from past music. The presence of new music, then, not only confronts what music has been, it also confronts present-day language and its capabilities. (We could say that the music “perturbs” the language.)

Listeners, faced with a proposal of the as-yet unfamiliar (new music), are oriented by the now-still familiar (their language). In between the proposal of what music is now to be, and the listener oriented by what music has been, yawns what journalism calls a “gap”, and what I have preferred to call the “inertia of language”: that linguistic time lag where the capabilities of the language are now found inadequate of giving tongue to the requirements of present-day propositions.

The reassembled proposal: conclusions

I reassemble the parts of my proposal into the complete statement:

Present-day syntax, conditioned by the concepts objectivity-subjectivity, prevents our language from bridging the “gap” between new music and audience.

Given this proposal, I make the following summation of what has been said:

1. An objectivity-oriented language creates for the listener the self-image that she is an “open” cognitive object. Reality (in this case, music) actively stamps itself on her, and she can only passively receive it; listening is considered a response, not an invention. With this image in mind, the listener will not feel called upon to intercede either in the sounds as they come her way, or in the language as it creates her way, offering itself as a descriptive template. This listener sees herself after the fact of the music, and she attributes her relations with the music as being a property of the music itself.
2. An objectivity-oriented language prevents the listener from being aware of language and aware of the effect language has on her listening process. However, at the same time, objectivity does not prevent language from affecting the listening process; it only prevents a listener from cognizing of its effect.

3. This language, of which the listener is unaware, will act on the listener and on the music, affecting her registration of acoustical events and measuring them by obsolete standards. Remember, these standards, which language has learned from what music has been, are precisely what new music is attacking and trying to change.

If the purpose of new music is to endow acoustical events with a sense which the acoustical material in itself would not possess and which can be perceived by an audience as a communication of contemporary relevance and significance about usually abstract visions and movements of the human mind, then this purpose seems to have gotten lost in our time, because the audience endows the music with a sense, which was perceived long ago, at an entirely different occasion, and which now will not communicate anything of contemporary relevance and significance anymore.

Herbert Brün
Against Plausibility

4. A listener who does not critically refer to the language and skeptically examine it, will nowhere be involved in the production of “her” musical experience. Rather, she will be involved in the reproduction of a universal musical experience that comes from notions and concepts that she is unaware of, and which are embedded in a language she does not see. To the degree that the listener is unaware of her description, to that degree does she fall prey to the assumptions in the description she’s being used by. (Only here is the passive voice appropriate.)

The language about music, influenced by the powerful concepts of objectivity-subjectivity, has become a syntactic agent who, in the name of truth and the real world, speaks about and measures the music. Under objectivity, language’s inertia is invisible, its insufficiency not apparent; and the production of a language that would measure and speak, in the name of the music, about the truth and the real world, remains undeveloped and its very possibility almost forgotten.

To say-about a said-about: retelling the story of the “Return to Tonality”

In the chronology of what has been said about new music, the most recent “dilemma” journalism has attached to new music is the “Return to Tonality” (see page 13). Using the proposals and conclusions in this article, I can retell the “Return to Tonality” story.

New music composers and listeners alike share a premiss—one which they have learned from the objectivity-oriented language: that listening is an affair between music and listener, and not an affair between music, listener, and language. Thus both composer and listener have gone separate and parallel ways:

The *composer* has busied himself with the attempt to create new events of sound. This activity has *informed* listeners as to the state of music, but it has not *taught* them. A tendency to neglect, or even to forget, the difference that exists between giving information about something and the teaching of something can be discovered everywhere, even in the most unexpected quarters, where the knowledge of this difference should certainly be assumed. Teaching would entail the composer addressing the language and concepts and standards and behaviors which

possess the listener, who must be dispossessed of these and rather be given a different language and different concepts and a critical view of her own standards—if new music is to be perceived. This, composers have not done. The composer’s professional competence up to the present does not teach but rather informs on facts.

And the listener?

The *listener* has continued to measure the acoustical events presented to her with her existent language—though she remains unaware of this process. While listening to the music she looks for a melody, or a good beat, or else she asks herself the apparently harmless question—Is the music beautiful?—all the time unaware of how the concepts and notions hidden in these questions are measuring the acoustical events.

Helmut Lachenmann writes about this interplay between composer and listener regarding the question of beauty:

In 1948, Pierre Boulez ended one of his articles thus: “I have a horror of dealing in words with what is so prettily called the aesthetic problem. Besides, I don’t want to make this article any longer; I prefer to turn back to my manuscript paper.”

This attitude was to become characteristic of young avant-garde composers in the 1950’s. A new world of sonic and temporal experience had been sighted from the vantage point of Webern’s serial techniques—a world centered on the organization of sound-material. Amid the bustle of striking camp and heading for the new Promised Land, the question of Beauty was not merely out of place; it was downright suspect. For it involved those criteria and taboos, value judgements and ideals, on whose ruins everyone was then standing.

So the concept of Beauty, dismissed as suspect by the avant-garde, was kept alive by society. Or kept society alive? Anyway, it lived on, not only as a general criterion for identification, but also in its customary and socially accepted form as reified category. This facilitated the process of identification by offering a shield against the reality that could no longer be mastered. The shield was an apparently intact *real* language: tonality and its expressive means. Blind to all that, the avant-garde failed society and reality.

Helmut Lachenmann
The Beautiful in Music Today

Thus while composers and audience seemed to be separated by a gap, they actually shared the same objectivity-oriented premiss: that language was not to be considered when speaking about the listening process. In the meantime, language continued to affect the situation.

Things are what’s said about them. Things cannot be what’s not said about them. Composers of new music did not provide the language that would enable listeners to re-address their concepts of beauty in the presence of the music. So music continued to be provided for by a language that was particularly not a composer’s language.

Between the composer who did not address the listener’s language but provided the music, and the listener who could not address the music but used her available measuring language, stepped the Press. The Press

filled in where and what the composer failed to provide: the language to measure the listener's musical experience.

The purpose of newspapers in a capitalist society has been to make readers require communication and communicativity; hence, the critic is forced, by the economics of the situation, to make readers require communication and communicativity in music. The Press, which is not only a means of communication, but also an argument for communicativity, can not and will not speak up *for* those events, attempts, experiments, whose intentions go beyond the representation of the already communicative, of the repeated and of the familiar. Thus the Press, as we have seen, speaks not in the name of the new music it attempts to describe, but rather, against that music: it applies its standards of quick and easy understandability to the music, and consequently finds new music wanting.

The newspaper is one of the phenomena which, protected under the paradigm of objectivity, profit from language's reputation of being depictive and not consequential. Language is considered a means for depicting or reporting what's out there, and is not seen as something which is happening here and having consequences. That the Press merely reports, is the status given to it by all; that the Press's reports have important consequences, is something understood by a few; and that these consequences are so far reaching that the reports may actually be causing the reported-about events, is a statement probably denied by most.

And the Press had consequences. The listener, who could have learned from the composer, rather learned from the Press, with its daily assembly line for the reproduction of language. The listener who did hear some new music could explain her reaction to its unfamiliarity (for to listen to a new music composition is indeed to be put out at sea, with all your expectations of what music is, unmet) by calling on the language readily offered by music critics: that this music was noise, was ugly, that there was a gap between music and listener.

And the Press had consequences. The listener who had not heard new music, but certainly read of it in the newspaper (the daily news being far more accessible than concerts of new music), was equipped for that music, should it ever come her way. For the majority of readers, the presence of the music critic's review of a new music concert not only acted as a substitute for the reader's presence at the concert, it also acted to substitute *its* interpretation of new music for the interpretation of the reader.

And the Press had consequences. Not only did this newspaper language and this machine for the daily production of interpretations affect listeners, it also entered the vocabulary of composers. As composers were unaware (and continue to be unaware) that language must be regarded as within the circle of composers' concerns, and as the structure of the Press made it opposed to the attempts of composers, composers made no attempt to critically attack and disarm and resist the Press's vocabulary and its implied argumentation:

accepting the newspaper's announcement of a "gap" and the implied assumption that the gap was negative (the paradigm of communicativity here at work), composers also accepted the implied argument that something had to be done to remove that gap;

accepting the newspaper's language that if something is good it will draw lots of people, composers looked at the small attendance at their concerts and found that to be evidence arguing for a weakness in the music, or something;

accepting the Press's standard that if something is good it will be a commercial success, composers

scrutinized their lack of commercial success and found that to be evidence of something wrong in the music, or something. . .

Further, the persistent reproduction in the newspapers of language clamoring for the “lost beauty” in music, found an ear in young composers who were more familiar with this newspaper language than with those ideas that had triggered the turn away from tonality.

As Lachenmann tells it:

For initiates and open-minded bystanders, the old temptation was irresistible: expectations of the Beautiful—as something theoretically neglected and unconquered, yet socially as intact and effective as ever, provided that well-worn tonal habits are tricked out with elements more exotically attractive—began to influence avant-garde thinking, which had once been strict. This was noted not with vigilance or even suspicion, but rather with amusement and sympathy.

Meanwhile the works of Ligeti, Penderecki, and also Kagel, were being understood and welcomed as an expression of a new-found freedom in the avant-garde’s thinking and self-awareness. The new tolerance of tonal elements that had once been so strictly excluded seemed to be a useful corrective to the compositional frustration which had led to progressive withdrawal from the serial utopias. While glorifying this “tolerance” as a product of “avant-gardistic” boldness, the composer reached a point where he was exploiting those very aspects of culture which had originally been shunned.

The veiled regression of the 60’s was followed by the open regression of the 70’s. The freedom to be tonal turned out to be the freedom to live in leaky places; the tonal “corrective” was revealed as corruptive. So the journey into the kingdom of unheard-of perception was over. The sly champions of veiled or open regression take up the discarded banner of the avant-garde and boldly parade it in circles. They are celebrating the comeback of the bourgeois concept of beauty in the same reactionary form it had at the end of World War II if not before: a form sickening to anyone who sees in art—or in beauty—more than just a masquerade. Today the avant-garde is brought low by that self-same bourgeois domesticated concept of beauty that it so arrogantly assumed it could ignore on the grounds that it preferred “to turn back to the manuscript paper”.

Helmut Lachenmann
The Beautiful in Music Today

The “Return to Tonality” story and its language dominate the newspaper reports, and not surprisingly, enter into the vocabulary of the music community, acting as the measuring standard of the fashionability of composers’ activities. For those composers to whom the temptation to return to the old pitch hierarchies continues to hold no draw, and who may be experimenting in densities or rhythm relationships, etc., their particular compositional experimentations are shelved as academic, old fashioned, cerebral, unfeeling, uncaring for the audience. For those composers who have decided to use the tonal system once again, the Press encourages them with stories of overwhelming success of other “returned to tonality” composers. This success, and those stories, are not surprising either: they act as evidence for the correctness of the newspaper’s “Return to Tonality” argument. Within that world in which the Press is spokesman, the move back to tonality *is* the right decision: an audience already primed and nagged into expecting entertainment

and beauty from music of course greets the composer's return to the familiar with open arms. Orchestras, being big business operations, for years refused to commission, play, or support more than a handful of new music compositions, arguing that such music was not what their audiences wanted. Now such orchestras commission compositions from those composers who use tonal means. These composers frequently dress up the old tonality with huge orchestrations, and are as interested as the orchestra hall managers in delivering the goods to the ticket-paying consumers. And for once, this "new music" is given good reviews by the Press. The channel between the language of the Press—with its demands for music to be and remain what music has been—and the "new" tonal compositions delivering the familiar and the redundant, now no longer contains that friction called the "gap".

The Return to the Kingdom of the Familiar is greeted with triumph by all those to whom familiarity, repetition, and redundancy is good business—all those who, having slandered new music, now gloat over its failure.

And we the composers? We too figure in this indictment. Having refused to address language, language now retaliates. As long as composers refuse to address the language used by our listeners, and as long as the Press pumps its language into listeners—so long will we be accomplices in this story of the "failure" of new music.

Addendum: Beyond the Subject—Points of Departure

The assertion in this article—that there exists a relationship between the present state of new music and its treatment under an objectivity-oriented language—provokes me to suggest several further investigations:

1. Cognitive acts (such as looking at art works, listening to music, reading a book, and so on) must be considered three-element systems, not two-element systems: these acts consist of the dynamic relations between perceiver, perceived, and perceiver's language; and not just the relations between perceiver and perceived.

In connection with this, the distinction between describing and listening, or describing and seeing, may need to be redrawn and investigated for traces of undesirable paradigms.

2. Further investigations must be made into the status of cause and effect in relation to cognitive acts. The story of who is doing and who is affecting or being affected, what is moving what and who affects who—this story must be retold so that it become consistent with new notions about cognition.
3. An audience approaching a piece of new music is in a situation whose structure is repeated in other areas: for example an ethnographer writing about people foreign to himself, or someone attempting to elicit from a problem its current self-description.

An I meets an It. If the It is already within the grammatical categories of the describer's (the I's) language, then there is no dilemma, no crisis. The describer's language is capable of registering what the describer has perceived.

When the It is not yet within the grammatical categories of the I's language, then at that moment the world takes a breath.

4. This article has traced the effects of the paradigm of objectivity-subjectivity on language. Other paradigms also affect language; I suggest investigating language for the effects of the paradigms of communicativity and of the reward-oriented hierarchy.
5. How can I claim that language, whose status is invisible, whose existence “goes without saying”, has so much power? I can claim that because just that which is paradigmatic, is thus invisible. The invisibility of a paradigm gives it its power, and its power depends on its invisibility. Language has its greatest power when it is not recognized. Thus the power of this paradigm must be explored and exposed, thereby laying bare the consequential status of language.
6. The point at which this article closes—on observing that an objectivity-oriented language prevents listeners from making that language which would enable them to register new music—is the beginning of another endeavor. The issue centers around the awareness of listeners as to how their language is affecting their listening. Implied, therefore, is the notion of listeners taking a stance which shows that they refer to their language while listening. This stance I call “to proceed self-referentially”. I propose that until language is made to take a self-referential stance towards itself—i.e., until it is made to measure and examine itself for all traces of concepts and paradigms it knowingly and unknowingly is reproducing—that until that time language will speak against, and not for, the music it is attempting to describe.

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