

Nomadology, Improvisation, Somaesthetics.

This paper will discuss the questions that are produced in an encounter between Deleuzian nomadology, experimental forms of musical improvisation (free improv, free jazz, etc.), and somaesthetics. For example, one aspect has to do with utilizing somaesthetic practices when performing and teaching musical improvisation: Within a nomadological conception of art, how might yoga and mindfulness be said to affect our capabilities as listeners and performers? Other questions pertain to the ways in which musical improvisation might shed some critical light on somaesthetic practices such as modern hatha yoga and mindfulness: In what ways can improvisational skills be important to consider when developing a nomadological approach to somaesthetics?

Intro

This paper is the expression of a desire to connect 3 forces that are highly important in my life: meditation, improvised music and experimental philosophy. More specifically, I want to conceptually articulate and attend to the possibilities that may be produced in an encounter between these three areas. Indeed, I believe that connecting them could prove highly interesting. The first area is what pragmatist philosopher Richard Shusterman calls *somaesthetics*: “the critical, meliorative study of the experience and use of one’s body as a locus of sensory-aesthetic appreciation (*aisthesis*) and creative self-fashioning” (Shusterman 1999: 302). The second area has to do with my experience as a performer and teacher of *experimental musical improvisation*, particularly inspired by so-called “free improv” and “free jazz”. The third area is my interest in Deleuzian philosophy, and my particular way of attending to it, which I will refer to as *improvisational nomadology*.

One aspect of juxtaposing these areas has to do with how one might benefit from doing somaesthetic practices when performing, listening to, or teaching musical improvisation. And how might yoga and mindfulness affect our skills as nomadological philosophers? Similarly, how might musical improvisation contribute to meditation and philosophy? Or put differently, in what ways may improvisational musical skills be interesting to consider when developing an improvisational approach to somaesthetics and nomadology? And how might improvisational nomadology contribute to thinking productively about musical improvisation and somaesthetics?

I will start with presenting a few aspects of somaesthetics and experimental improvisation, and then in the third part on nomadology I will also explore possible connections and cross-fertilizations.

Part 1. Somaesthetics

Shusterman (1999) argues that some forms of somatic training may improve the acuity, health, and control of our senses by cultivating heightened attention to and mastery of their functioning, while also freeing us from bodily habits and defects that impair sensory performance. Somaesthetics thus works at improving awareness of our bodily states and feelings, providing greater insight into our moods and attitudes. In a quest for happiness, claims Shusterman, somaesthetics can help us understand more clearly the body as a locus and medium for pleasures, intensified or better savored through improved somatic awareness and discipline. Conversely, somaesthetic practices provides for a ‘psychosomatic management’ of pain, its mastery and transformation into tranquillity or pleasure.

Regardless of whether this proves to be true about specific somaesthetic practices, my aim is rather, and in contrast to Shusterman, not so much to argue therapeutic or

meliorative values as to discuss their creative potential. That is to say, I'm primarily interested in the ways in which somaesthetic practices might offer the possibility of developing certain skills of sensitivity and responsivity, and how these skills in turn might resonate with doing nomadological philosophy or musical improvisation.

I will give three examples:

First example: A highly important aspect of some somaesthetic practices is learning to *feel the body move* and to *move the body differently*. This engages a more explicit involvement with and focused attention of movement. One aspect of this attending to movement is to intensify the experience of proprioception in general and kinesthesia in particular.¹ One might say that the 'natural attitudes' of the human body - its everyday postures, bearings, gestures and movements - are changed in order to produce non-ordinary modalities of movement awareness, thus intensifying what in phenomenological accounts is referred to as 'the bodily felt sense' (Levin 2003: 180-1). A more Deleuzian, non-phenomenological version of this would be the intensive: impersonal affect or rhythm that should not be understood as a transcendent, authentic layer—as in the notion of the pre-reflective—but more productively as an immanent source for conceptual and artistic creativity. As such, kinesthetic awareness may offer one way of accessing what Daniel Stern called vitality affects, and this may in turn inspire the production of concepts and sounds. Moreover, returning to the experience of movement for some people seems to offer more 'plural self-identities' by producing heightened forms of multi-sensory awareness and a less stressed sense of identity (Smith 2002) - a less rigid sense of oneself and one's body, as it were.²

Second example: Philosopher Drew Leder (1990) argues that most everyday actions will be directed *away from the body*, as it were, so that one's body is normally rendered subsidiary, not only as a physical means to an end but within the structure of attention as well. Most of the time, then, whole corporeal regions and powers are 'absenced', being directed towards some or other object in the 'outer world', which effectively relegates the body to the status of neutral background.³ When the kinesthetic and affective body is habitually treated as a neutral background to goal-oriented thoughts and actions then the body is experienced as 'alive' in itself. This may at worst produce disturbing feelings of alienation; one feels emotionally disconnected from what is perceived as 'the outer world'.⁴ But somaesthetic practices can teach us how to utilize bodily capacities and powers differently, resulting in a form of heightened sensitivity. Moreover, as Phillip Zarrilli argues (2004), we may also learn to develop a heightened awareness of the moving and breathing

¹ 'Proprioception refers generally to a sense of movement and position. It thus includes an awareness of movement and position through tactility as well as kinesthesia, that is, through surface as well as internal events, including also a sense of gravitational orientation through vestibular sensory organs. Kinesthesia refers specifically to a sense of movement through muscular effort' (Sheets-Johnstone 1998: 272, n. 13).

² Indeed, to learn how to move in ways that are not intended to accomplish something in 'the outer world' may have the effect that movement has a less literal or tangible quality, not so much associated with goal-oriented 'action' as with affect or mood (Bartenieff 1980: 59). This means that attending to movement can indeed be a 'liberating' experience. Learning new styles of moving can also bring about transformed affectivities, depending on the particular qualitative, kinetic dynamic involved (Sheets-Johnstone 1999a: 158-9; 1999b). That is to say, changing one's way of using the body can have a significant impact on how we feel about ourselves and the environment (see Bartenieff 1980: 157-8).

³ In addition, many people typically narrow their perceptual skills to a relatively restricted range, not least due to habitual inattentiveness to kinesthesia and proprioception, but also due to an overly goal-oriented and stressed reaction pattern that tends to disregard sensory details of smell, taste, and sound in everyday environments.

⁴ And, as Matthew Ratcliffe argues, if one's sense of the world is tainted by such detachment, by a "feeling of unreality", this will most probably also affect how all objects of perception appear. They are distant, removed, not quite "there" (Ratcliffe 2005: 45).

body even when our attention is directed towards something other than this body itself. Somaesthetic practices thus enable us to experience our surroundings and our bodies in a more dynamic, animated and relational mode.

Third example: Simon O’Sullivan (2008) argues that meditation, and introspection more generally, is a technology of transformation that may allow us to move from a narrow or reactive mode of being to one that is more open and creative. It does this, argues O’Sullivan, following Bergson, by maintaining a gap between stimulus and response: a “slowing down” which entails becoming aware of one’s habitual reactions, and thus subtly altering them so as to make possible a kind of super-productivity. Breaking habits, then, involves a first moment of awareness of habitual reactions to stimuli, as well as a second moment of non-reaction or “disinterestedness”, ultimately to pleasure and pain.⁵

The attentional skills and the non-ordinary uses of the body that one acquires through somaesthetic practices can thus be said to assist in producing life-intensifying forms of responsivity and sensitivity, as well as ways of returning us to experience itself, as it were. Unfortunately, however, many somaesthetic traditions understand thought solely in terms of a representationalist view of language, one which ultimately may prove counter-productive to aims of intensifying life. Indeed, it may well be argued that creativity and freedom is dependent also on our capacity to break out of and carry forward the language we inherit and find ourselves already using, which requires that one learns how to think more creatively with words (Levin 1997). And this is, of course, one of the contact points with which Deleuzian nomadology may connect. Nomadology may provide precisely the promise of non-representationalist, experimental philosophy that fluidifies and intensifies *along with* somaesthetics, as it were—rather than positioning itself in a hierarchical relationship to it (as in describing, mastering, opposing, or subordinating itself to somaesthetic practice). Another contact point could be improvisation, because that is where the skills of sensitivity and responsivity perhaps reach their most intensifying and forceful fruition.

Part 2. Experimental Improvisation

To learn to improvise in music entails learning how to *break* habits, establishing habit-breaking habits, so to speak, in ways that make for an attractive and unexpected musical

⁵ Here we might also mention an important complementary aspect in many meditation practices, namely compassion. In my experience, I find Marshall Rosenberg’s *Non-Violent Communication*, or NVC for short a highly useful method or skill for empathically connecting to needs and desires behind words. That is to say, the affectivity and drive of any utterance is of course always simultaneously virtual and actual, both fundamentally unknowable, non-localizable, and unfinalizable, as well as temporarily definable, an emergent structure as it were. And NVC seems to offer particularly productive tools for connecting to the affective dimensions of talking and writing, for connecting us to that omni-present virtual desire which is always actualized as needs, whether unmet or fulfilled, and as attraction. We might see NVC as helping out with the actualization phase of affect, as it were. The NVC process thus helps to articulate desire, to empathize with and assist in our own and others’ articulations. The NVC vocabulary of “feelings” and “needs” may assist in personalizing affect in intensely constructive ways because it creates an affirmative and compassionate resonance between the participants or interlocutors. NVC consistently prompts us to always affirm desire, and thus to redirect the force of those habits that relate and connect negatively in terms of lack or guilt instead. That is to say, if NVC offers us affirmative strategies it also works to destabilize the “betrayal of desire” (although NVC may also make it possible to establish a form of acceptance and mourning in situations when desires are overpowered by other forces, when needs are unmet; and yet this acceptance nevertheless also allows for a constructive and affirmative striving to keep at work). Of course, what we also need, as nomadological philosophers in and of the everyday, is a *virtualization* phase. That is, we need also the *de-personalization* that both meditation and improvisation offers us. We need to learn skills for breaking our habits so that our emotions and needs do not become repetitive or limitative (thus getting stuck in its own versions of authenticity and propriety).

process. The improviser thus has to learn to consistently construct open systems, on the spot; creating musical gestures that engage a form of spontaneous self-organization; certainly a territorializing but also an in-the-moment deterritorializing. In other words, improvisation has to do with developing the skills that make it possible to rapidly and consistently find ways of breaking into and out of control, even if these breaks are found in the smallest of details rather than in the grandeur of the sensational. Improvisation, then, is about learning process-oriented skills for keeping one's attention focused on the details of continuous variation rather than on any particular stopping point or end-product.

There will often be idiomatic constraints that guide the improviser. It is only with *experimental* improvisation, however, that idiomacy is more radically experimented with as well. Sometimes experimental improvisation is therefore called "free improv" to emphasize the "freedom" from "tradition" as it were.⁶

Most often, however, this "freedom" shows itself to be hard-won, because as soon as an experiment seems to be working, and is received well, then the territorializing powers of Life set in with full force. Experimentation thus can never be a matter of genre. Instead, we might say, truly *experimental* improvisation precisely manages to afford maximal movement *between* molar and molecular, arborescent and rhizomatic, order and disorder, equilibrium and non-equilibrium. It is, then, only the experimental improviser that consistently lets go of both, in order to always encounter and be violently forced. It is only the experimental improviser skillfully adapts and explores the random and the uncontrolled as a part of the musical event itself. This exposes the improviser to the unknown, to the radical outside, to the transcendental and impersonal field of immanence, which is then also performatively dramatized. Experimental improvisation thus dramatizes what it means to experience forces external to our bodies, as they hit you. Experimental improvisation shows us what it means to be forced to think, to be forced to make sense. And it does this by dramatizing, not symbolizing but by struggling with time itself. Of course, there is no experimental improviser *per se*, only momentarily arising and disappearing experiments.

The last pages of the chapter "Of the refrain" (pp. 349-350 in *A Thousand Plateaus*) suggest that deterritorializing the refrain does not mean abandoning the mediocre refrain (e.g., the bad, the popular, the territorial assemblage, or "conventional" musical material). Nor can it be about attempting originality ("building a new system"). Rather, the non-mediocre, the truly creative and new, is more about using *any* musical material as a "springboard" and "releasing it in the Cosmos", opening the musical assemblage onto "a cosmic force" by constructing a "new chromaticism" in which the musical elements are "placed in communication", thereby bringing about "a becoming of Forces". And it is experimental improvisation that can use more or less *any* musical and extra-musical material as a springboard, even the most mediocre as it were. This is so to the extent that the improviser learns how to affirm any contribution or starting point whatsoever as a creative opportunity, whether musical or extra-musical, thus focusing on the process of continuous variation rather than as trying to evade certain things as being more inherently or essentially interesting. And this seems to happen precisely by acknowledging the mediocre and then exploiting it to the fullest by allowing a minute detail to break out of its projected lines of growth.

But for any of this to happen the improviser has of course to develop a variety of experimental skills. I will give a few examples in the following:

⁶ As David Borgo puts it, "Free improvisation is an umbrella term that describes the work of an eclectic group of artists with diverse backgrounds in avant-garde jazz, avant-garde classical, electronic, popular, and world music traditions who share an interest in exploring improvisation unencumbered by overt idiomatic constraints" (Borgo 2002b: 21, n. 3).

In learning the skills of *fast interplay*, the improviser practices instant response and develops the courage and the musical-technical ability to quickly structure and de-structure, and thus learns to respond to the input from others while simultaneously maintaining the integrity of one's own contribution. The result of this is actually a slowing-down: Having developed the skills to hear many sound-events, gestures and idiomatic projections at once is like the martial artist who experiences the opponent's movements in slow-motion, thus affording many more alternatives for action. The skills of fast interplay are also what some might call "embodied", because they are lodged in a creative intelligence that does not seem to require pre-planning or second-order awareness, even if it may productively interact with such mentations. However, the presence of a bodily intelligence does not, of course, have to be idealized in terms of a phenomenologically authentic "lived body". Rather, it requires only that we recognize that there is a creative force, perhaps experienced as "coming from the body", which does not require self-reflexive mental processes in order to function, and which nevertheless cannot be reduced to pure reflex or habit.

Improviser and scholar Tom Nunn (in his *Wisdom of the Impulse*, 1998) discusses other sets of deeply complex skills in use by experimental improvisers. He shows how the individual improviser learns to establish, maintain, cadence and begin anew so-called musical "identities", or territorializations, which may include melodic and rhythmic motives as well as gestural identities of shape, articulation, timbre, and so on. In experimental ensemble improvisation these signatures are constantly in the process of being experimented with, deterritorialized, in and through a direct interaction with other musicians as well as extra-musical influences and components. Thus, this is a highly complex musical interaction in which the distinction between sources is consistently blurred. The experimental improviser aims for gestural continuity [cf. consistency] by linking together successive identity gestures according to the ongoing implications of the moment, but he or she also faces the challenge to relate individual identities to the group, establishing a variety of relational functions.⁷ There are, then, a great variety of transitions at work, ranging from sudden changes and unexpected continuations to prepared cadences and gradual changes. Moreover, a variety of relational functions and transitions can also occur simultaneously and in hybrid combinations.

In the words of improvisation researcher David Borgo (2002a, b), experimental improvisers aim to perform a creative labor that allows for unpredictable yet dynamically ordered and understandable occurrences. Borgo argues that free improvisation ensembles could be approached as forms of open, autopoietic, and dynamic systems:

A state of "nonequilibrium" is reached through the expectation by all present that music will be made and the specific mandate of free improvisation to deconstruct or recontextualize known or familiar musical properties. ... Even a small change in the first performance gesture—a shift in dynamic level, attack, or articulation, etc.—can lead to a sudden divergence from the evolution of a system started with nearly identical initial conditions. (Borgo 2002b: 11)

So, skilful dissociation, unpredictable sonic outcomes, unavoidable discrepancies, diverging interpretations of gestures, and so on—all this will introduce randomness into the system. Individual musical territorializations are varied and combined to form relational functions between the various voices in the ensemble, and localized orderings arise as relational functions are established, transformed, and abandoned. Improvised transitions can be seen

⁷ Such as *solo* (a dominant voice), *support* (active underlayment), *ground* (static underlayment), *dialog* (immediate interaction), *catalyst* (stimulating change), *sound mass* (a collective complex sound with voices being roughly equal in contribution), *interpolation* (insertion or overlaying of utterly foreign material upon existing material).

as *bifurcations*: at transitional moments there is an instability of the system which paradoxically provides a source of order emerging from chaos. The improvisation is determined by the immediate interactions between performers as well as the *unplanned* combination of musical expressions within the collective texture. Musical properties can develop spontaneously in and through a collection of interacting components without being implicit in the individual contributions (Borgo 1997: 24).

Arguably, ensemble improvisation, when successfully self-organizational, constructs a *Dividual multiplicity* because it becomes arbitrary, indeed impossible, to decide who contributed and initiated what exactly, who or what came first as it were. This differs perhaps from more hierarchical forms of music-making that involve a composer, a conductor, an interpreter, and so on (cf. Gilbert 2004). Experimental improvisation is thus about constructing a kind of group identity that neither dissolves nor merges individual contributions, a multiplicity that is irreducible to the terms of the One (a homogenous mass) or the Many (concatenation of discrete individuals) (Bogue 2003: 42). Motifs are consistently deterritorialized, cut loose from their specific contexts and juxtaposed in unstable, shifting relations. In this "amalgamation of cultural voices", as Ronald Bogue puts it, we hear "the sounds of a people in the process of formation" (Bogue 2003: 51). Arguably, experimental improvisation can draw on a variety of influences and cultural voices in ways that are comparatively more flexible and wide-ranging than pre-composed or idiomatically improvised music. Nunn, for example, emphasizes that experimental improvisation may involve the non-constrained use or mix of various *sound systems* (ranging from modal and diatonic to chromatic, pantonal, and atonal). And although irregular *rhythmic character* and irregular *phrase lengths* are more common, these will nevertheless often alternate with regular rhythms and phrase lengths for musical efficiency. Moreover, the emphasis is typically on compound *voice* texture, the coexistence of multiple independent voices (cf. Deleuze's *multiplicities*, and Mihail Bakhtin's *radical polyphony*), yet improvisation also involves responsive and quickly changing interaction among voices to create a variety of shifting relationships. Taken together this entails an unusually high degree of openness to diverse sounds, musical practices, conventions and genres, and so on.

Part 3. Improvisational nomadology

When it comes to philosophy, I am interested in pursuing what we might call *improvisational nomadology*, an experimental expression of Deleuze & Guattari's "machinic philosophy". Improvisational nomadology proposes a style of [collaborative] writing that highlights a certain improvisational quality, a certain form of "liveness" or "ad hoc-ness" ["for this purpose/situation"] that actively and explicitly works to redirect and reconstruct any inclination towards seeking too much systematicity or compositional unity.

All nomadic philosophy is of course experimental to the extent that it wants to engage in a productive conceptual creativity that articulates matters in terms of their simultaneously nomadic and sedentary tendencies, always with the aim to intensify and re-intensify life. Yet, perhaps nomadology can also be more or less improvisational in style. In order to clarify what I mean by this we might look at what Brian Massumi (2002) calls the exemplary method:

As a writing practice, exemplification activates detail. [...] Every little one matters. At each new detail, the example runs the risk of falling apart [...]. Each detail is like another example embedded in it. A microexample. An incipient example. [...] Every example harbors terrible powers of deviation and digression. [And] The desired result is a systematic openness: an open system. (2002: 18)

Improvisational nomadology could, then, be understood as a style that rather radically adopts this exemplary method, not just accepting "the risk of the sprouting deviant" but

actively and consistently inviting it in stylistically performative ways. That is to say, improvisational nomadology also dramatizes the very nomadocity it desires to map conceptually.

In nomadic and experimental philosophy we may of course use already established concepts--i.e., idiomacy as it were—but then extract them from their usual connections and confront them with an example or a detail. As Massumi puts it,

The activity of the example will [then] transmit to the concept, more or less violently. The concept will start to deviate under the force. (Massumi 2002: 18)⁸

Perhaps what distinguishes a more improvisational style is simply that the systematicity of the resulting text is more outspokenly open-ended, performatively pregnant with incipience, overtly incomplete, manifestly autopoietic, and candidly structured by unpredictable and uncontrolled connections. Improvisational nomadology would also, perhaps, more frequently invite for collaborative styles of philosophizing, comparable to ensemble improvisations in music (as Deleuze & Guattari themselves did). In my view, then, musical improvisation may have a lot to offer the nomadic philosopher, both as an inspirational resource for conceptual creation, but also, and perhaps more importantly, contributing to and resonating with the development of improvisational skills in philosophy.

Vijay Iyer, for example, an improvising pianist and music cognition researcher, has argued that experimental musical improvisation is particularly effective in directing attention towards the temporal situatedness of perception. In Deleuze & Guattari's language, this is "to wrest the percept from perceptions of objects and from states of a perceiving subject" (WP, 167). To quote Iyer:

The experience of listening to music that is understood to be improvised differs significantly from listening knowingly to composed music. The main source of drama in improvised music is the sheer fact of the shared sense of time: the sense that the improviser is working, creating, generating musical material, in the same time in which [they are] co-performing as listeners. As listeners to any music, we experience a kind of *empathy* for the performer, an awareness of physicality and an understanding of the effort required to create music. This empathy is on facet of our listening strategies in any context. In improvisational music, this embodied empathy extends to an awareness of the performers' coincident physical and mental exertion, of their 'in-the-moment' (i.e., in-time) *process* of creative activity and interactivity. (Iyer 2004: 162)

Besides the promise that improvisation may have in expressing temporal situatedness as an effort, another aspect of this is that the structural form in experimental improvisation is also more "modular". That is, it is located in the free play of small constituent units, perhaps similarly to Massumi's microexamples. This modularity is, in fact, a common feature in many African and African-American music traditions. In groove-based music-making, for example, quoting Iyer again, "Instead of long-range hierarchical form, the focus is on fine-grained rhythmic detail [and] the dialogic interplay of various musical elements, [...]. Thus, large-scale musical form *emerges* from an improvisatory treatment of these short-range musical ingredients—that is, from the in-time manipulation of simple, modular components" (Iyer 2004: 163).

In various ways, then, experimental improvisation can typically draw attention to the very *process* of inquiry, not least by drawing away from object-recognition and making more explicit, in and through the musical event, that perceptual experience is more fundamentally a "temporally extended process of exploration" (Noë 2000) [i.e., percept]

⁸ He continues: "Let it. Then reconnect it to other concepts, drawn from other systems, until a whole new system of connection starts to form. Then, take another example. See what happens. Follow the new growth. You end up with many buds. Incipient systems. Leave them that way. You have made a systemlike composition prolonging the active power of the example." (Massumi 2002: 18-9)

than a passive, transparent, and instantaneous perception of pre-given objects [i.e., perception]. Experimental improvisation thus strives for an explicit experiential complexity in which it is felt more pronouncedly that there is no “perspicuous vantage point from which to perceive the entire event, and no particular ordered set of perceptions for the listener to follow passively in order to apprehend the ideal ‘work’” (Iyer 2004: 167). In a similar way to improvisational forms of music-making, then, nomadology too could activate detail and modularity in various ways that stylistically directs attention to the the exertion, the in-time process.

Kaustuv Roy, in his *Teachers in Nomadic Spaces* (2003), has spoken about similar things. As Roy puts it, “the students’ learning can better emerge in relation with the teacher’s struggle against the tendency toward molarization” (Roy 2003: 69), and “the teaching moments appear as the molar categories come apart” (Roy 2003: 97). Similarly, improvisational styles may affect us differently than compositional ones, precisely because they also dramatize the struggle, the encounter with the “radical outside” and the productive uncertainty that this evokes. Improvisation performatively displays the very uncertainty and vulnerability that creative processes demand from us. To learn how to linger with details requires that we develop vulnerability and courage, which in turn creates a kind of alertness, thus re-directing both restlessness and sluggishness.

Roy argues that it is the powers of deviation and digression—the example that is continuously falling apart, as it were—is really transformative. As he puts it,

The most subversive kind of transformation is, [...] contrary to popular notions, not necessarily the largest and the most grandiose, but the almost invisible fracture, the instantaneous that can annihilate old structures. (Roy 2003: 129)

But this requires that we find ourselves in a zone of indeterminacy and uncertainty, one that meditative and improvisational skills may teach us. We sometimes need to wait for something to hit us, for the force of the sprouting deviant to teach us, for the molar categories to disintegrate; even if it is only about a split-second. Meditation and other somaesthetic practices might then prove helpful to the extent that they offer us ways of creating a gap between stimuli and reaction, de-instrumentalizing our actions and thus opening us towards randomness and unexpected connections; increasing connectability as it were. Put differently, somaesthetic practices afford ways for becoming-receptive, for becoming-open, for increasing receptivity and sensitivity. But then improvisation also does this, in a different way, as well as affirming a becoming-sexual, affirming excessiveness and overabundance, participating in the capacity of life to produce that which is of no use but which nevertheless attracts and appeals. As Elizabeth Grosz argues in her recent book *chaos, territory, art* (2008), creativity is first and foremost sexual, the capacity of life to not just satisfy but also to intensify, “to resonate and become more than itself” (Grosz 2008: 4). And improvisation may also be particularly efficient in provoking the uncontrolledness and randomness of modular free play that exposes us to outside forces. Similarly, mindfulness might enable us to develop a particular quality of disinterestedness, and it teaches us to really listen, to linger on detail, to receptively engage with the sprouting deviant and the microexample, and thus to be able respond non-reactively and creatively. So, both improvisation and somaesthetics, we might say, gives us tools for consistent fluidification: we may learn ever more about what it means to experience and create alternatives of transitions and relational functions; affording movement between nomadic and sedentary tendencies; affirmatively re-working the mediocre, in and through fast interplay, modular free play, and the sprouting deviant.

It’s not that we cannot fluidify in and through philosophy only, it’s just that improvised music and somaesthetics supplies us yet more tools and experiences, and these may resonate with and thus re-intensify each other, consistently.

It's really about the possibility of establishing a circle of interconnecting, cross-fertilizing and mutually enhancing productivity: Improvisational experimentation requires mindfulness to produce the gap; to develop a particular quality of presence, of sensitivity and responsiveness, a readiness to be affected, a becoming-aware of the microdetail, thus allowing for a vulnerability that makes us susceptible to the incipient example, that finds a productive balance between restlessness and sluggishness without which action and thought becomes pushy, repetitive, sluggish and/or reactive. Improvisation too provides all these things, in its own ways, but it also dramatizes the eventness of becoming, thus abundantly inspiring the sexually creative production of sound, in music, and of conceptuality, in philosophy. Improvisation teaches us how to be out of control, exposed to the random, to the unpredictable, and to the collaborative Dividual multiplicity.

If it is, as Grosz puts it, that philosophy can perhaps work *with* art, alongside it, “seeking what it shares with art, what common origin they share in the forces of the earth and of the living body, what ways they divide and organize chaos to create a plane of coherence, a field of consistency” (2008: 4-5), thus “addressing the same provocations or incitements to creation as art faces—through different means and with different effects and consequences” (2008: 2), then nomadology can perhaps become improvisational and mindful. But then music and meditation can also become nomadicized by nomadology, regenerating thought again and again. In nomadology, we might say, the way to deal with reifications is to expose the very *processes* of reification. It is to focus on the “taking form”, whether of bodies, words, or sensations. It is to look for *morphogenesis* and *metamorphosis* rather than accepting or staying with the simply “given form”. Nomadology thus engages with radical contingency and the non-linear, always looking for *emergence*. But nomadology also accepts that emergent structures must always become “stratified”, at some point, even if only momentarily, even if only quasi-stratified. And thus nomadology is able too dynamically and ongoingly philosophize how all bodies, languages and organisms are always an unstable admixture of the sedentary and the nomadic, of the arborescent and the rhizomatic. Order and chaos are not opposed to each other; they are not two different things but rather “grasp into” each other. With this acknowledgement nomadology supplies us with efficient tools for pursuing lines of flight, for disfiguring the habitual, but also for recognizing the inevitability as well as the promise that lies precisely in the inexhaustible tension between virtual tendencies; the double pincer of Life. It is this nomadological tension, that helps us to virtualize; it gives us opportunities for consistently returning to the double bind itself; and it assists in de-personalizing affect by destabilizing the reifying and systematizing powers of language. And as such nomadology may assist the improvising musician and the meditator, as well as vice-versa. If the double bind of the virtual and the actual is, in a sense, the vibratory force of the earth itself, then philosophy, music and meditation will surely resonate with each other in infinitely productive ways. If the forces of the earth are always virtually the same and actually different, “the unity in difference of the universe itself” as Grosz puts it (Grosz 2008: 81), then each expression brings with it fragments and residues of all others; musical and philosophical improvisations resonate with each other. If there is a common foundation that music, meditation and nomadology share with each other, then it may be precisely the “aim of capturing the *force of time*” (2008: 86): to make time resonate sensibly, conceptually and compassionately. Compassionate receptivity, vulnerability and sensitivity will energize conceptual thought, and nomadology may, in turn, revigorate affectivity. Improvisation sexualizes, randomizes, modularizes and dramatizes in ways that increase the connectability of all thought, including nomadology. But then it is also improvisational nomadology that makes possible a sexualization of philosophy, intensifying in and through the excessiveness of free play and continuous variation.

Klas Nevrin, Improvising musician and PhD Candidate
Department of Ethnology, History of Religions, and Gender Studies,
Stockholm University, Sweden

Bibliography

WP: *What is Philosophy?*

ATP: *A Thousand Plateaus*.

- Bartenieff, I. (1980) *Body movement: coping with the environment*, Langhorne: Gordon & Breach.
- Bogue, Ronald 2003. *Deleuze on Music, Painting and the Arts*.
- 2004. “Apology for Nomadology”, in *Interventions*, vol. 6:2, 169-179.
- Bonta and Protevi 2004. *Deleuze and Geophilosophy*. Edinburgh University Press.
- Borgo, David 1997. “Emergent Qualities of Collectively Improvised Performance: A Study of an Egalitarian Intercultural Improvising Trio” in *Pacific Review of Ethnomusicology*, Vol. 8, No. 8, pp. 23-40.
- 2002a. “Negotiating Freedom: Values and Practices in Contemporary Improvised Music” in *Black Music Research Journal*, Vol. 22, No. 2, pp. 165-188.
- 2002b. “Synergy and Surrealstate: The Orderly Disorder of Free Improvisation” in *Pacific Review of Ethnomusicology*, Vol. 10, pp. 1-24.
- 2003. “The Embodied and Ecstatic Sounds of Jazz” in *Open Space*, Vol. 5.
- Ingold, Tim 2007. “Creativity and Cultural Improvisation: An Introduction” in Ingold & Elizabeth Hallam (eds.) *Creativity and Cultural Improvisation*. Oxford, UK: Berg.
- 2000. *The Perception of The Environment*.
- Iyer, Vijay 2002. “Embodied Mind, Situated Cognition, and Expressive Microtiming in African-America Music” in *Music Perception*, Vol. 19, No. 3, pp. 387-414.
- 2004. “Improvisation, Temporality and Embodied Experience” in *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, Vol. 11, No.3-4, pp. 159-173.
- Kovach, J. (2002) ‘The Body as the Ground of Religion, Science, and Self’, *Zygon*, 37(4): 941-961.
- Leder, D. (1990) *The Absent Body*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Levin, D.M. (ed.) (2003) *The Body’s Recollection of Being: Phenomenological Psychology and the Deconstruction of Nihilism*, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.
- Massumi, Brian 2002. *Parables of The Virtual*.
- Nevrin, Klas 2008. ”Empowerment and Using the Body in Modern Postural Yoga” in Mark Singleton & Jean Byrne (eds.) *Yoga in the Modern World: Contemporary Perspectives*. Routledge; pp. 119-139.
- Noë, Alva 2000. “Experience and experiment in art” in *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, Vol. 7, No. 8-9, pp. 123-135.
- O’Sullivan, Simon 2008: 99-100; “The Production of the New and the Care of the Self”, unpublished manuscript)
- Ratcliffe, M. (2005) ‘The Feeling of Being’, *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 12 (8-10): 43-60.
- Sheets-Johnstone, M. (1999a) *The Primacy of Movement*, Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- (1999b) ‘Emotion and Movement’, *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 6(11-12): 259-277.
- (1998) ‘Consciousness: A Natural History’, *Journal of Consciousness Studies*, 5(3): 260-294.

- Shusterman, R. (1999) 'Somaesthetics: A Disciplinary Proposal', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*. 57(3): 299-313.
- Smith, M.L. (2002) 'Moving Self: the thread which bridges dance and theatre' in *Research in Dance Education*, 3(2)
- Zarrilli, P. (2004) 'Toward a Phenomenological Model of the Actor's Embodied Modes of Experience', *Theatre Journal* 56: 653-666.