

ON THE SELF AND ETHICS IN MUSICAL IMPROVISATION

WHAT CAN WE LEARN?

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INTRODUCTION

ANXIETY ABOUT THE VALIDITY OF IMPROVISATION

Improvisation is still the rebel (?)

...

It should be the norm, not the fringe alternative...
structurally enforced

CRITIQUE

The discussion has a tendency to excluded many non-western types of improvised music

- Kamache & Pina E. Cunha (2008)
- Frisk & Östersjö (2013)

Improvisation as a stylistic delimiter is problematic

FOUR THEMES

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- method

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- ethics

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- method
- ethics
- play

FOUR THEMES

- method
- ethics
- play
- knowledge

METHOD

The practice of improvisation as a method with which different values may be proposed

ETHICS

The practice of improvisation reveals a certain possibility for ethics

Focus is on *what happens*, not *how to make it happen*

PLAY

Play, or free-play, is the activity that is not bound to a particular concept

KNOWLEDGE

Whether musical practices can give rise to knowledge outside of its own field

- it is not the art object as knowledge (though it could be), it is the *doing* of art

METHOD

Control or giving up the control?

*When improvising, am I creating
material when I play or do I find it?*

Creating/Finding: problematic metaphors, but useful
methodological tools

Improvisation, Computers and Interaction

Rethinking Human-Computer Interaction Through Music

Henrik Frisk

PhD Thesis



DOCTORAL STUDIES AND RESEARCH IN FINE
AND PERFORMING ARTS NO 6

FOUCAULT: *PRACTICES OF FREEDOM*

In this method a particular development between self and others is at the core

Inspired by Foucault's notion of the *care of the self*, a self that is rooted in "practices of freedom"

ETHICS, FREEDOM AND REFLECTION

Freedom is the ontological condition of ethics. But ethics is the considered form that freedom takes when it is informed by reflection.

Foucault, Rabinow & Hurley (1997) Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth, New Press, New York.

SUMMARY

As long as I care about the relation between myself and the other, and the larger context, I can be free to follow my artistic and ethically informed intentions, which will enforce my freedom

THE CARE OF THE SELF AS PRACTICE

The care of the self is not a solipsitic activity



FOUCAULT

When you take care of the body you do not take care of the self. The self is not clothing, tools, or possessions; It is to be found in the principle that uses these tools, a principle not of the body of the soul.

FOUCAULT

You have to worry about your soul—that is the principal activity for caring for yourself. The care of the self is the care of the activity and not the care of the soul-as-substance.

FOUCAULT

You have to worry about your improvisation—that is the principal activity for caring for yourself. The care of the self is the care of the activity and not the care of the improvisation-as-substance.

The principle that uses the tools of artistic practice is in essence the aesthetics of the creative act: the practice itself.

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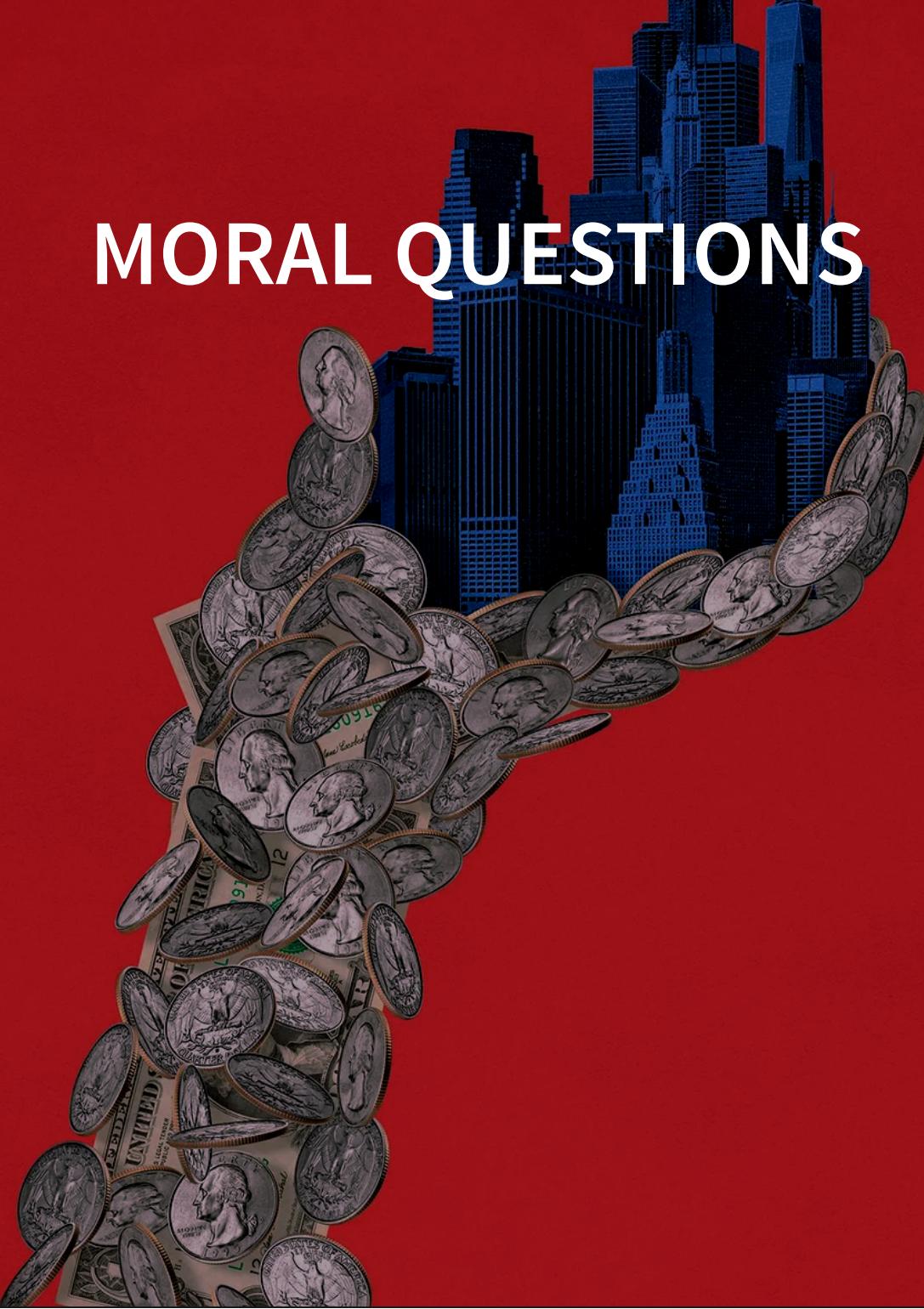
THE CARE OF THE SELF: A FOCUS ON THE WORLD AROUND ME

- connections exist, matter, and need to be good and respectful
- a developed sense of ethics comes from a deep understanding for the relations I'm engaged in
- maybe paves the way for a artistic knowledge claim
 - through these *connections* knowledge may be developed

ETHICS: MOTIVATION



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- the possibility for interpretations of moral questions is shrinking.
- the panoptic control structures of social-media become second nature and they offer an understanding of ethics that is both normative and irrational.

MUSIC

Both music and ethics lack clear definitions - yet, they are incredibly important

Ethics in artistic practice, that is, the moral values that are expressed through artistic practices in music, may complement traditional views on ethics.

EXAMPLES

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1. social and musical ethics in conflict

Frisk (2014). *Improvisation and the self: to listen to the other*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

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Frisk (2014). *Improvisation and the self: to listen to the other*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing.

2. acting upon the freedom given by the situation

Frisk (2013) *The (un)necessary Self*, Lund University Press.

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- ethics of artistic practice is described here as a form for play

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- the artistic practice enables new ethical perspectives.
- the *play* is for the sake of playing
- the bi-product is knowledge and the discovery of the meaning of concepts outside of the play.

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- the former creates freedom and the latter consumes it.

DEFINITION

this free play of associations is perhaps best described by Susanne Langer (2009) as a *uncritical fusion of impressions, that exercise the powers of symbolic transformation*

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- they are equally difficult to determine in ethics
- in both cases there is a need for a framework through which the judgements may be applied
- Artistic practice, developed through the care of the self, is proposed as such a framework

THE INTERACTIONS ARE THE PRIMARY INTEREST

It is the interactions that are made possible by engaging in an artistically driven play with the objects:

- a free play with no particular meaning

In this free play I can engage with certain questions in a way that would otherwise not have been possible. Improvisation is part of the method that allows me to do this.

KNOWLEDGE

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- Holdhus, Høisæter & Mæland et al. (2016) Improvisation in teaching and education—roots and applications, Cogent Education.

KNOWLEDGE IN ARTISTIC RESEARCH

- Vera, Nemanich & Vélez-Castrillón et al. (2016) Knowledge-based and contextual factors associated with R&D teams' improvisation capability, *Journal of Management*.
- Kamoché & Pina E. Cunha (2008) Improvisation and knowledge: the challenge of appropriation, *Management Research: Journal of the Iberoamerican Academy of Management*.

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- rooted in a relational ontology

CENTRAL QUESTION

how thinking about improvisation in this way may allow me to understand the ways I may approach the other in and through this practice

I will attempt to devise a method with which I can understand and explore these processes from the inside of my own practice, well aware of the potential limitations in scope that this will carry.

IMPROVISATION AS METHOD

improvisation is a method with which musical and human relations can be explored and with which new music can be found and created.

KNOWLEDGE CLAIM

The knowledge lies in the connections between the various agents involved in the practice

SUMMARY

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- it can provide us access to important knowledge about relations through relations
- this knowledge transcends biographical information

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- it is through the practice that the knowledge is revealed
- it is through new connections that it is conveyed
- it is the way that the network grows that shows its epistemological potential

THANK YOU!

QUESTIONS?

