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IMPROVISATION, CONSCIOUSNESS AND COSMOS: AN INTEGRAL VIEW OF JAZZ RESEARCH

Ed Sarath

A growing number of visionaries view consciousness as the next frontier in human evolution. My 2012 book, *Improvisation, Creativity and Consciousness: Jazz as Integral Template for Music, Education and Society*,¹ the first book to apply to music principles of a consciousness-based worldview, called Integral Theory, examines jazz from this standpoint. In this essay, I reflect on the ramifications of this thinking for jazz research. The guiding questions open up from aspirations to broaden our understanding of the idiom and its rich creative, socio-cultural, historical, aesthetic and other dimensions to questions surrounding the transformative capacities of the art form. In this light, my integrally inspired investigation includes both expanded perspectives on familiar (albeit elusive) topics—such as evolution of the individual voice, the dynamic interplay of exploratory and emulative practices in creative development, and the strong interest in meditation and spirituality among a long legacy of jazz artists—as well as more far-reaching ideas, such as improvisation as rooted in the structure of the cosmos itself. Improvisation, in other words, is not only a vehicle for accessing the innermost dimensions of our creative and spiritual reservoirs, this central expressive process—to foreshadow what I call Integral Jazz Mysticism—is also an intrinsic aspect of the universe we inhabit and co-evolve with as cosmic ensemble members.

At which point, to provide just one example, a notion as commonplace as the blossoming of the individual voice—which I correlate with C.G. Jung’s principles of individuation, archetypes and collective unconscious (223)—takes on entirely new significance. For now, this personal artistic imperative becomes an overarching human and even existential imperative, which in turn yields a fundamentally new context for arts-driven societal transformation and the place of jazz and improvised musical art therein. I think of this in terms of a jazz-driven “creativity and consciousness revolution” (2) that takes hold in music studies and radiates outward to education and society at large. I believe that, in a single stroke, an integral model of jazz research could illuminate the idiom’s transformative capacities as well as shed new light on more conventional areas of jazz inquiry and practice.

Let me say a bit more at the outset in order to set the stage for distinctions between conventional and integral approaches to jazz research. Important to my account and integral approaches across fields is not only delineation of expansive future horizons, but also diagnosis of obstacles to the paradigmatic, or vertical change—as opposed to the token horizontal embellishments that often prevail (particularly in academic change deliberations)—that characterizes the integral revolution on overarching and discipline-specific scales. Here a further Jung-inspired integral principle, that of the *shadow* (123), may be particularly useful. Deep in the psyche are repressed emotions, anxieties and psycho-emotional-somatic fissures that, unless they are identified and processed, give rise to various types of pathologies. While these are typically examined on a personal basis, the same principle—whereby internal splintering and repressive tendencies impact outer behavior—holds on collective scales. I identify as a primary example of a collective shadow what I call a Matrix of Materialism (127)

that—inherited from music studies and the academy at large—permeates jazz research, as with much jazz and music pedagogy. By materialism, I refer to tendencies in philosophy-of-mind circles to either reduce consciousness to a neurobiological substrate, or confine consciousness as epiphenomenal to that substrate (16, 127).² Materialist perspectives tend to privilege corresponding scientific viewpoints and research and are framed, at least implicitly and often explicitly, in opposition to spiritual viewpoints. An integral view of consciousness differs in two fundamental ways: One is its embrace of wisdom from spiritual traditions across the globe, the second is its expanded view of science that is not bound by the science-spirituality divide that is particularly strong in academic culture. Indeed, an emergent body of leading-edge scientific research classified as *psi*, strongly—albeit marginalized in higher education— notions of consciousness as nonlocal, intersubjective (or collective) and physically/temporally transcendent. Two important examples loom large when it comes to ramifications for an integral jazz research paradigm.

First is the notion of soul, which is not only closely aligned with the concept of ascended ancestors that is central to African and diasporic worldviews and aesthetics (132), but also denotes a deep source of creative expression. When Alice Coltrane, with her adopted name Turiyasanghita reflecting her immersion in Vedanta, states that “your creativity comes from within, your heart, your soul,”³ she is not merely waxing poetic, she may be speaking from the standpoint of direct engagement with an ontologically veridical, core dimension of consciousness.

Second is the principle of collective or nonlocal consciousness, the enlivenment of which jazz musicians know well from their experiences of oneness with fellow musicians and listeners during peak performances. Again, the meeting of emergent empirical findings from the sciences with ancient wisdom about the wholeness of consciousness—hence, vintage integralism—may elevate what might be easily dismissed (or superficially embraced) as unbridled artistic musing to an entirely new ontological status. Jazz, then, might contribute to broader consideration of this revived understanding as well as reap its inherent benefits in the form of enhanced appreciation of this musical genre. The centering of the integral, nonmaterial view of consciousness that underlies movement in this direction might in turn give rise to further aesthetic insights as well as transformative interventions, some of which I consider below.

Let us not lose sight of the philosophical turn that underlies the integral jazz argument: Aligned with the Vedantic premise of *advaita*, or nonduality (136, 217), in which a primordial stratum of eternal consciousness or spirit underlies all of the creation, the integral model is predicated on the primacy of consciousness, or cosmic subjectivity, whereas materialism is predicated on the primacy of matter.

While these ideas may seem too abstract to be of practical use, one need not look far for key manifestations. In this vein, I step back from music and trace a long history of educational criticism—from Alfred North Whitehead and John Dewey to Carl Rogers and Abraham Maslow to Maxine Green, Howard Gardner and bell hooks (142-6)—that laments tendencies to reduce learning to passive ingestion of information and facts at the expense of broader creative

development. It requires little in the power of imagination to then see parallels in music studies, where musicianship—for the musical majority—is reduced to interpretive performance of age-old repertory. It would be almost inevitable that jazz studies programs (with some notable exceptions) tend to privilege the replication of stylistic norms over exploration of new horizons (Integral Theory stresses the balance between the two lines of engagement). What about jazz research? I argue that among the direct manifestations of materialist inertia is the dearth of inquiry into the interior dynamics of the creative process, as opposed to its structural results (style features, repertoire, etc.). In other words, where is inquiry into the interior mechanics of improvisation, where moment-to-moment creative decision-making is explored from the vantage point where cognition, temporal awareness, transpersonal experience, aesthetics, and culture intersect? I offer a framework called Nonlinear Time Dynamics (182) that attempts to fill this void. Closely related is the dearth of inquiry into spiritual dimensions, amid a backdrop of fairly common anecdotal mention of jazz artists' interest in the realm.

Integral Theory therefore provides language and concepts that help us delve deep into regions of inquiry that, in part because they transcend conventional language and analysis, can be highly elusive, as well as promotes highly meticulous examination of a wide range of terrain, musical and extramusical, that impacts jazz research. Indeed, among the aspects of the framework that I appreciate most is its capacity to “swing far, hard and wide” (19) between the biggest questions about human nature and its place in the cosmic wholeness and the most intricate details of craft and analysis. The range of influences that inform the blossoming of the personal voice, interplay of improvisation and composition, multi-tiered analysis of the jazz time feel, multiple readings of the jazz tradition, juxtaposition of modal, tonal free and global jazz streams that took hold in the 1960s, and detailed delineation of a jazz-driven paradigm of music studies are among the more familiar areas of inquiry that take on new significance through the broader integral lens.

And it is this swinging from whole-to-part and part-to-whole—to foreshadow another key integral concept in my account—that imbues jazz with its transformative potential. I close the book with a chapter called “Planet Earth Takes a Solo” (397) and argue that, if there is reason for optimism about the future of our world, humanity will need to function like a 7 billion-plus member improvising ensemble and skillfully navigate the “chord changes”—ecosustainability, social/racial/economic justice, educational reform, peace building, spiritual renewal—that define this juncture in time. This lays groundwork for what, in my most recent line of pursuits, I call “Integral Afrofuturism.”⁴

Let me go further into these and other IT principles.

Integral Theory Overview

Integral Theory is an emergent, consciousness-based worldview that, in the words of philosopher Ken Wilber, commonly regarded as the leading contemporary exponent of integral thought, brings together “the sum total of human knowledge is available to us—the knowledge, experience, wisdom, and reflection of all major human civilizations” Within this cross-disciplinary expanse, one of the most important contributions of Integral Theory is its capacity to

embrace both the timeless insights of “the ancient shamans and sages” as well as the latest “breakthroughs in cognitive neuroscience.” (2)

Key features include the interior and exterior dimensions of human nature and the importance of engagement with diverse epistemologies in order for inner-outer unification to be realized. Hence, the terms yoga and religion, both of which are predicated on union, may be recognized as virtually synonymous (14). I analyze this integrated consciousness in terms self-Self unity (82): A personal egoic dimension of self realizes its true nature as the transcendent, eternal Self, even if most individuals remain oblivious to this connection. What are called flow, peak experiences, or “the zone” are fleeting glimpses—what integralists call *states* (130)—of this unity. Integral maps situate these temporary episodes of unity within a context of enduring developmental *stages* (98), where self-Self integration is established as a permanent condition of consciousness. I argue that the combination of jazz’s robust creative epistemologies, with improvisation at its core, and meditation provide a powerful template for growth in the direction of unified consciousness. Individuation, or blossoming of the personal artistic voice, is an important indicator of this growth along the creativity line. Higher stage integration is an important indicator along the consciousness line.

Integral models of this progression include 1st-2nd-3rd person domains (28), which correlate with spirituality, art, and science. All human endeavor involves an interplay of spiritual, artistic and scientific engagement. Balance between the domains is key to optimal growth. The Matrix of Materialism reflects an objective, scientific focus that overshadows first/second-person dimensions. The integral Four Quadrants (29) model offers more nuanced analysis. Materialist ideology reflects Upper Right absolutism, again which pertains to objective, scientific emphasis.

I offer a one-sentence definition that attempts to encapsulate the many dimensions of IT in order to help guide practical application of the principles:

Integral Theory maps the inner-outer dimensions of human nature and creative/spiritual potential, the processes by which inner-outer integration is achieved, and the evolutionary dynamics by which systems evolve over time. (24)

Let us now take up creativity-related considerations followed by those consciousness-related, always bearing in mind that the boundaries between the two realms often blur: One cannot adequately fathom creativity without broaching consciousness, and vice versa. Jazz may be a discipline in which this principle is uniquely vivid.

Creativity-related premises

I define creativity in terms of what I call the “three I’s”: Invention, interaction and individuation (42). Invention pertains to the generation of ideas, interaction the exchange of ideas, individuation the evolution of the personal creative voice.

Creativity is not an either-or affair, where someone or something is either creative or not. Rather, creativity is a matter of degree. Everyone has creative potential and can grow

creatively. Optimal creativity is “self-transcending,” (55) meaning one’s point of departure launches a spectrum of engagement that opens up to wide-ranging connections. Work in a specific artistic medium is informed by and thus inevitably enlivens inquiry into intra and inter-artistic, socio-cultural, psychological, aesthetic and other areas.

Epistemological diversity (123)—or diverse ways of knowing—is key to self-transcending scope. The power of jazz lies in its grounding in multiple improvisatory languages, diverse approaches to composition, somatic and rhythmic dimensions, amid a rich conceptual array.

The extent of one’s creative vitality is directly predicated on the extent to which one’s engagement in a tradition is self-transcending. Put another way, we cannot truly know a realm until we penetrate beyond its horizons and access broader terrain.

The greater the epistemological scope, moreover, the greater the prospects for individuation, or evolution of the personalized creative voice over time. An integral understanding of this central facet of a jazz aesthetic not only expands the slate of influences that inform the process but dispels common confusion surrounding it.

Individuation

The blossoming of the personalized creative voice is a familiar topic in jazz research. An integral perspective, however, sheds entirely new light on what this means, the factors involved, and how this unfolds. I use as a starting point Jung’s notion of individuation as the integration of interior and exterior dimensions. Exterior criteria include the totality of one’s musical and broader socio-cultural experiences and upbringing and resultant psychological proclivities. Interior criteria include the transcendent or archetypal content that comprise individual and collective consciousness. “Every single kind of food consumed, dream dreamed, interaction with self, others and surroundings experienced, and idea imagined and transcendent episode invoked is metabolized into the artistic voice, depending upon the scope of epistemological engagement.” (225)

Where Integral Theory excels is in providing models for how this metabolization happens. It is one thing to understand the obvious, musical dimensions of this infusion: Charlie Parker immersed himself in the music of Lester Young, as did Lee Morgan did with Clifford Brown, and Ron Carter with Ray Brown, all with clear results. This principle holds even across genre boundaries, as in the case of John Coltrane’s forays into Hindustani music. However, when it comes to transformation of extramusical influences into musical sounds and structures, this is new and, admittedly, challenging territory. Whether or not Bird actually stated, “if you don’t live it, it won’t come out of your horn,” the premise is widely accepted. But how does this happen—how are life experiences metabolized in sound? I propose a framework based in what I call the integral “archetypal channel,” where a spectrum of epistemological engagement that spans the totality of motor skills, aural exposure, socio-cultural influences and grounding in fluid, transcendent experience that is transcendent of language, rational thinking and sensory engagement and which thus provides an interior conduit for all experience to flow and inform creative development (225).

Several further points bear emphasis regarding individuation.

First—individuation will take hold in a wide array of forms (231). For some artists it will involve radical departures from convention, for others it might lead them to fairly normative terrain. In all instances, the creative expressions of individuated artists will evoke depth and transformative impact. This in sharp contrast to musicians who seek to play either “in” or “out” due to current fashion instead of an interior impulse that extends from their deepest creative instincts; the resultant music will likely be empty, meaning devoid of the transcendent magic that characterizes transformative art. The obligation of the artist is to be true to their innermost voice, regardless of how it takes hold.

Second entails the interplay of “emulative” and “exploratory” engagement (41). Meaning, both intensive immersion in tradition as well as robust exploration of the outer edges of tradition, broaching trans-traditional terrain, are essential to individuation. Contrary to conventional, linear thinking, however, it is not that first one masters tradition—which is a life-long affair—and then explores new possibilities. Rather, the two can go hand in hand.

The task of the educational institution is to provide students as wide a range of experiences as possible, including emulative and exploratory balance, in order that students may optimally find their own voices.

Syntactic/nonsyntactic interplay

I have found Leonard Meyer’s taxonomy of syntactic (harmony, melody and rhythm) and nonsyntactic (density, timbre, dynamics, tessitura, silence) parameters to be quite useful, along several lines of application, and—even if he framed his classification from a Western vantage point—even across cultural boundaries. For example, wide-ranging modal traditions in which notions of harmony are irrelevant can still be understood in terms of pitch languages, which interact with rhythmic languages in the syntactic realm. While, of course, there will always be exceptions to any generalized framework, musical traditions with pitch-rhythmic syntactic structures are quite abundant across the globe.

I use nonsyntactic parameters as creative catalysts in much of my improvisation teaching, regardless of students’ levels of expertise or musical backgrounds.

When it comes to individuation, the syntactic/nonsyntactic framework upholds both evolutionary and diagnostic functions. A central evolutionary principle is that the greater the epistemological diversity, the more that syntactic and nonsyntactic structures are rendered fluid and thus, as the basic elements and configurations of musical sound, malleable with extramusical influences. This in turn enhances highly personalized blossoming of creative expressions. Think of the opposite, from a diagnostic standpoint, as in the case where improvisers are so bound by idiomatic conventions—with bebop a common example—that the prospects for individuality are minimized. Expansion of the exploratory scope to balance the

emulative emphasis breaks down syntactic/nonsyntactic conditioning and allows a greater range of personal musical and extramusical influences to inform one's style development.

Western syncretic aesthetic and educational ramifications

While much of my overall account applies across cultural boundaries, it is important to emphasize that my model for individuation is rooted in a Western syncretic aesthetic (3, 125, 345) and corresponding educational principles. In other words, my interest is in mapping how jazz opens up to the broader musical world according to principles that govern stylistic and cultural confluence in the West. My educational vision thus unfolds accordingly. I do not propose educational or artistic developmental models that might be suitable for musicians in other cultures across the world. Individuation takes hold differently across cultures, and it is important to not impose principles from one tradition upon others.

This is not, however, to suggest that my analysis neglects jazz's planetary infusion as part of the individuating spectrum for many of its practitioners. Important to jazz's status as a self-transcending tributary that opens up to the world's musical ocean is identification of key landmarks for corresponding excursions. In this context, I identify George Lewis' Afrological and Eurological streams as key examples. As Christopher Small wrote, "the meeting of African and European traditions is among the most fruitful developments in the history of the world's music," a principle borne out by even cursory understanding of the origins and evolution of jazz. Here, however, I emphasize my view of this not as a horizontal melding, but, as Samuel Floyd has stated, the "integration of European influences atop African religious beliefs and practices." Nonetheless, one cannot deny the prominence of Afrological and Eurological structures, whether in light of the modal/tonal/post-MT jazz pitchscape or compositional practices, particularly regarding large ensemble writing, that include orchestration and notions of formal architecture. Thus, when I also emphasize that "Afrological and Eurological" aesthetic streams are not the only ones" (63), and even surmise about the identification of Asiological and other streams, it is with these important gateway topographies in mind. This relates to my distinction between multicultural and transcultural models of musical pluralism and corresponding navigation. Whereas multicultural thinking tends to err in the direction of a "musical flatland," seemingly broad in scope yet devoid of key topographies, I argue for transcultural (238) interventions in which tradition-specific salience coexists with trans-traditional robustness. Examples of the latter in my account include fertile cultural sources, including Indian, midEastern, South American, African and indigenous traditions that have been important to the evolution of jazz.

The task of the educational institution, then, is to operationalize the transcultural, syncretic principles in learning environments that best suit the needs of the majority of students. This means making as wide an array of pathways as possible available to students, and allowing them to find their voices within this expanded framework. Again, some students will—regardless of educational scope—eventuate in normative, conventional ways. Others (I believe the majority) will gravitate toward broader, syncretic scope. All pathways are viable providing they are grounded in interior aspirations as opposed to exterior, institution-imposed destinations.

Four identities

I thus identify the role of four key musical identities (234) from this educational/aesthetic standpoint. These are the *Interpretive Performance Specialist* (IPS) (as in classical performer), the *Mainstream Jazz Musician* (MJM), the *Free Improviser* (FI) and the *Contemporary Improviser Composer Performer* (CICP). In arguing that the CICP is most conducive to individuation due to its creative scope, I do not rule out the possibility that the individuation process may lead musicians to any of the identities (among others). An important point here is that CICP foundations are ideal for whatever destination one arrives at.⁵ In other words, instead of imposing other-than-CICP frameworks on all or most students from the outset, music learning models that proceed from the expanded CICP scope from early on will then provide students tools that will help them find their most meaningful musical avenues. A wide-angled lens is always capable of the most intensive focus; a narrow lens does not work the other way.

Important considerations pertaining to change over time come into view. Knowledge systems, whether individuals or institutions, evolve from less differentiated to more differentiated wholeness (36). This can also be thought of as diversity within unity. Differentiation, moreover, is punctuated by periods or patterns of dissociation (138), where differentiated parts take the extreme step of being disconnected from the whole. Perhaps among the most dramatic examples involve tendencies for science to dissociate from its connection with spirituality and thus the spirituality/art/science trinity. Science that restores this connection is more differentiated, and thus capable of vastly greater contributions to humanity than dissociated science. The same assessment holds, of course, for spirituality; spiritual engagement that is disconnected from science and art is far more limited than when the broader, richly differentiated interconnectedness (where each area can evolve along its particular trajectory, but always with parallel pathways in view, and thus a coevolutionary thrust) is intact (116).

In the same way, a music learning model predicated on jazz CICP process scope is more differentiated than one designed around the Mainstream Jazz Musician, let alone the even less differentiated Interpretive Performance Specialist model that dominates most music schools (in and beyond the West). I argue extensively that the IPS is a dissociated fragment from the earlier CICP model that was prevalent in the European classical tradition (Beethoven, Bach, Mozart were CICPs!), and that restoration of the dissociated part to its prior and more healthy differentiation status is key to the next evolutionary strides, as opposed to possible extinction, in the classical realm. To rephrase an earlier point, musicians can always eventuate at other than CICP destinations with CICP foundations, but now their destinations will be richly differentiated and thus internally driven rather than riddled with dissociation and external rigidity.

While the Free Improviser is not common in the musical world, it is somewhat evident in professional circles and thus is a good example of how these principles apply widely. Free improvisation skills without tonal/modal/rhythmic foundations are less differentiated than free improvisation skills with those foundations. The point is not that musicians' expressions need to overtly reference these foundations, but simply that the existence of the foundations may

deepen one's scope of style structures. When a free improvisation identity is driven by evasion of foundations, either driven by false progressivism, or perhaps due to laziness, this may be another instance of dissociation. Along the opposite extreme, tonal improvisation that is so focused on bebop conventions that it precludes spontaneity and interactive capacities (whether in open or pitch-based improvising contexts) represents dissociation within the improvisatory realm. An integral approach to applied jazz research places this kind of analysis front and center.

Diverse applications of postmodern principles

Integral Theory has important insights to offer postmodern discourse, which originated in literary criticism and represents an important, if limited, development in the contemporary academy. Following Wilber, I map a premodern, modern, postmodern, integral progression that I apply widely (51, 124-5, 139, 247, 277). I distinguish between corresponding readings of tradition in arguing against both modernist and even postmodern conceptions of the jazz tradition; an integral view of tradition includes a consciousness dimension to which postmodern conceptions tend to be averse (154). The same holds when it comes to the above identities, the individuation process and educational models. Conventional models, constrained by modernist inertia, are less conducive to individuation as postmodern models, examples of which are few but nonetheless evident. Integral music learning approaches are yet more conducive to individuation than postmodern approaches, again due to the more developed interior dimensions.

Creativity across fields

While creativity has long been deemed largely the province of the arts, recent years have seen increasing interest in creativity across disciplines. What has been called the "New Jazz Studies" positions jazz as a particularly rich source of guidance and wisdom for creativity and innovation in fields as diverse as architecture, business, law, medicine, and sports. I take this thinking further with a framework for Integral Jazz Studies, that brings a consciousness component into play. Among the offshoots of my inquiry are jazz-inspired perspectives on how creativity differs between the arts and other fields, not with the purpose of privileging artistic creativity but illuminating its unique aspects, as well as features that may be harnessed by practitioners in other areas. "A central premise is that artistic materials tend to be more abstract in nature than the materials in many disciplines beyond the arts (with notable exceptions), which renders artistic expression more conducive to the expression of transcendent, archetypal content. (72)." An artistic idiom such as jazz "combines abstract materials and a robust creative scope that provides awareness with a particularly receptive conduit" (73) for expression of deep, abstract content. I go on to acknowledge that biologists, physicians, and engineers may also penetrate to deep archetypal dimensions in their creativity, but a key difference is the concrete surface materials through which they express their ideas. I therefore emphasize that "the composition of a sonata or making of a painting are not intrinsically more creative than the design of a toilet seat or recycling system, (73)" but that their functions are different. The arts uphold an aesthetic rather than utilitarian function.

I now turn to consciousness, beginning with further elaboration on far-reaching dimensions broached earlier, and then moving into meditation and related practices. As noted above, creativity is never far from view.

Consciousness-based considerations

General and strong nonduality premises

I view the notion mentioned earlier of the primacy of consciousness, and the inextricable link between individual and cosmic consciousness, as a general nonduality thesis. I propose the idea of individual creativity—and thus improvisation—as rooted in cosmic improvisatory creativity as central to a “strong nonduality” thesis (136, 217). Here I invoke the Vedantic principle of *lila*, or cosmic play (28). A common theme among scholars and traditional texts on the topic is the characterizing of universal creativity as spontaneous and capricious, which Tagore compares to “the play of a child.” (218) I paraphrase philosopher Henryk Skowlimnowski, who wrote eloquently on the cosmic origins of human creativity—“human beings are co-evolutionary participants in the cosmic improvisatory unfolding.” (219) Moment-to-moment improvisatory play in music and other fields is a direct manifestation of the universal improvisatory play that gives rise to the infinitely diverse creation. Brahman curves back on itself and generates primordial frequencies, or vibrations, configurations of which take hold in archetypal impulses that are enlivened in human creative processes.

Dissociation in jazz research is also evident in common aversion to fathoming the creative and transpersonal dimensions of the music. I am not talking about failure to mention improvisation or the spiritual interests of many jazz artists, but actual probing of the interior mechanics of the improvisation-consciousness relationship. Central to my analysis is comparison of the mechanics of transcendent experience in improvisation and meditation.

Beginning with meditation to lay important groundwork: The personal self is to the transcendent Self as the wave is to the ocean (83). Ordinary consciousness is when the self is severed, or dissociated, from its transcendent Self source. The wave is disconnected from the oceanic depths atop which it rises and falls. Transcendent experience involves wave experiencing itself as inextricably linked to the ocean. In the silence of meditation, where self-Self unity is invoked outside of ordinary sensory, physical or intellectual engagement, there is no object of perception apart from awareness, or consciousness, itself. In the turbulence of improvisatory experience, self-Self unity occurs along with perceived object/s—in the form of creative/somatic/sensory/cognitive engagement. (86)

Recall my above distinctions between states and stages of consciousness development. The first denotes a temporary glimpse, the second an enduring unity of consciousness. Using the Vedantic sequence of *turiyatit cetena*, *bhagavad cetena* and *brahmi cetena* as an example (parallels with which are evident across many cultures), (89) I discuss ever-evolving musical manifestations, including enhanced creativity, mind-body integration, fluid execution and profundity of ideas, evolution of the individual voice, interactive capacities—including oneness between performers and listeners, and mystical union.

An integral view of the mechanics of transcendence helps illuminate an important area of jazz practice and inquiry in which creativity and consciousness directly merge. This pertains to distinctions between improvisatory and compositional creativity, with the purpose not of reifying divisions but, in fact, highlighting co-evolutionary possibilities.

Improvisation is not a subspecies of composition!

Common classification of improvisation, which embodies process-mediated creativity, as a subspecies of composition, an object-mediated creative process, is yet another manifestation of the materialist matrix. Through a framework called “nonlinear time dynamics,” (170) I challenge the prevalent notion that improvisation is a real-time subspecies of composition and emphasize the need to understand the processes on their own terms, as contrasting cognitively/culturally-mediated pathways to transcendent experience. I quote Steve Lacy: “There is a music that must be composed, there is another that can only be improvised.” Of course, there are instances where the two processes intersect, but without recognizing the massive amounts of music that fall clearly into one realm or the other, we will never appreciate—or fully harness—their complementary and co-evolutionary relationship, for which I argue the jazz improviser-composer profile is exemplary. Moreover, the extrication of improvisation from compositional subspecies status is essential to the overarching campaign against jazz inferiority, a viewpoint that remains deeply entrenched in the academy.

The point is not, perhaps as a form of reverse discrimination, to argue that improvisation is a superior form of creativity than jazz. In fact, I emphasize that, while both streams originated in a common improvisatory ancestor, neither represents a higher degree of creativity than the other. Both are foundational modes of creativity that differ not in “degree of creativity, but in kind,” and which work powerfully in tandem (170). The deeper our understanding of foundational differences between improvising and composition, the more we can appreciate—and harness—their coevolutionary relationship. Hence, the CICP identity that once prevailed in Eurocanonic practice (340), and which has made its more recent return in jazz, thus takes on even greater significance for 21st century musical navigation and understanding.

Improvisation-meditation relationship: parts-to-whole/whole-to-parts epistemologies

My modeling of improvisation and composition as contrasting culturally mediated, cognitively mediated pathways to transcendent experience also sheds further light on the improvisation-meditation relationship. (180) Why, in other words, have so many jazz artists gravitated toward meditation practice? Here is where my parts to whole/whole to parts interplay may be useful (37).

Whereas improvising and composing both constitute parts-to-whole avenues to unified consciousness, meditation is a whole to parts avenue. This sets for understanding the sheer richness of the jazz epistemological scope. I map through a model called “Nested Synergies”: From the meditation-improvisation relationship, we can add composition to form a meditation-improvisation-composition matrix. From this, we can add rhythm, aurality, performance, somatic engagement and a long litany of conceptual (theoretical, historical, cognitive, aesthetic,

transpersonal) considerations. (112, 308) This lays groundwork for understanding how jazz and improvised music can contribute to a new paradigm of music studies, which I address more below. This sheds further light on the CICP identity as both evolutionary and co-evolutionary locus for Jazz and Eurocanonic practice, as well, from a diagnostic standpoint, heightened understanding of Interpretive Performance Specialization (not interpretive performance per se!) as a dissociation from a prior, more comprehensive framework. I emphasize throughout the book that engagement with the European canon can take its next evolutionary strides when interpretive performance is restored to a differentiated, rather than dissociated facet, of the CICP identity (292). A lineage that happens to be called “jazz” restores the broader template, now in more differentiated, integrated and contemporaneous form.

Interaction

Jazz and improvised music have much to teach us about the multi-tiered nature of human interaction (207) As noted above, the self-interaction—exemplified in the merging of self and Self that is accessible through creative and contemplative processes—is a central form of interaction. Another interactive tier comprises the exchange of information through musical sounds between musicians and listeners. Audience members can become part of the improvising ensemble not only through overt gestures of approval, but through more subtle, and perhaps more powerful means, including the experience of oneness with performers and the totality of forces that comprise the performance event. (216).

What is Jazz?

Integral Theory’s multi-dimensional lens enables a particularly expansive response to this elusive question (245). The surface level (third-person, objective) include the stylistic features of the music—its improvisatory processes, rhythmic and pitch languages. Underlying that level is the socio-cultural, or intersubjective sphere—the range of ethnological influences that have shaped the origins and evolution of jazz. The subjective level is that of the transcendent, archetypal forces that fuel socio-cultural and structural evolution. (247)

I devote considerable attention to the musical and societal turbulence of the 1960s as key to a deeper understanding of jazz’s origins and future possibilities (265). Yet again, the multi-tiered nature of the integral perspective comes into play. At the musical surface, we saw new developments during that period in the expanding of the jazz pitchscape, approaches to improvisation, rhythm, timbre, texture, and interaction. These were fueled significantly by socio-cultural upheaval—the Vietnam War and civil rights activism prominent therein. As African American culture took considerable strides in identity empowerment, reclaiming of African roots among musicians was paramount. I argue that the combination of this overlying musical and societal turbulence and underlying archetypal thrust, where transcendent impulses that reside in the deepest regions of individual and collective psyche, and cosmos (always remembering that cosmos and psyche, in philosopher Richard Tarnas’ words, are inseparable), contributed to the unearthing of deep structures in the music.

I use the advent of modal jazz as an analytical focus from this perspective, centering on the curious fact that, whereas modality preceded tonality in European classical music, in jazz we

find the opposite. Why might this be? I argue, along with Joachim Berendt, that jazz and blues from the beginning were rooted in an underlying modal thrust. However, due to a host of socio-cultural and musical circumstances that confined much jazz to tonal practice, mid-20th century turbulence allowed the underlying modal impulse to find surface expression (264), and in turn—consistent with the overarching syncretic aesthetic—coexist and coevolve with tonal and other streams of jazz practice. This, of course, focus on jazz’s pitch languages represents but one line of analysis. I elaborate on how the jazz pitchscape is inextricably linked with many other dimensions through models of “cross-parametric” evolution.

Jazz as archetypal feminine

The integral creativity/consciousness lens significantly expands the criteria by which we define and understand any area of inquiry. Among the more provocative and perhaps counter-intuitive application of this principle pertains to my correlation of Afrological and Eurological aesthetic streams with, respectively, feminine and masculine archetypal constellations (201). Two lines of thinking converge here. One involves research by feminist anthropologist Heidi Gottner-Abendroth and others into ancient archeological sites that have led them to surmise that the communal rites of matriarchal societies were highly improvisatory, hence rooted in a “matriarchal aesthetic” (201) that can be distinguished from the patriarchal, aesthetic that is clearly evident in Eurological practice (following the disappearance of improvisation in that lineage). More specifically, is the distinction between composers creating in isolation from performers and listeners as opposed to unified creation and performance and listener reception. To be sure, to situate jazz within the feminine archetypal context flies in the face of the dramatic gender imbalance in the idiom (both demographically and aesthetically). However, let us not necessarily conflate prevailing patterns with the final narrative of jazz, which, I believe, has scarcely yet to unfold. Indeed, even in the 10 years since ICC appeared, we have seen a significant shift in awareness of jazz gender-imbalance problem. Even if interventions have not yet taken hold apace, I feel strongly that these will follow, and that recognition of the archetypal feminine principle, and its close connection to jazz’s improvisatory roots, will fuel movement in this direction.

Music School of the Future

The place of jazz within overall music studies has been a significant topic within IASJ circles, including within its Ongoing Dialogues series. Whereas much of the discourse on this topic is centered around how to incorporate jazz in the curriculum, my interest has long been about the possibility of a music studies paradigm, at least in the West, in which Jazz and Black American Music are central. I lay out such a vision, with particularly focus on an innovative core musicianship model—preliminary groundwork for which I have laid at the University of Michigan—in which a wide range of offerings, including what are now parsed out into separate areas of theory, history, aurality, keyboard, performance is integrated atop jazz-based improvisatory, rhythmic foundations. (312, 317) Reflecting the transcultural aesthetic that underlies the model, connections are made from jazz to European classical music and a range of global traditions. Of particular significance is a framework for rhythmic skills that draws from Indian, midEastern and African traditions and practices. The framework includes connections to contemplative experiences.

Atop the reframed, creativity-based, integrative curricular core, students can then take more specialized electives in wide-ranging areas as they are inclined. A considerably expanded ensemble framework provides diverse performance outlets, including a balance of conventional and improvisation-based large and small ensembles. A large improvising ensemble called the Creative Arts Orchestra is part of the expanded ensemble spectrum.

Of equal significance to the practical features of the model is a new paradigm of musicology that I call Integral Musicology (300). Improvisation and contemplative engagement are core epistemologies that launch an expanded and richly integrated range of creative, performative, theoretical, historical, aesthetic and cognitive inquiry. The profile of the musicologist shifts from specialist scholar to creative artist/scholar/mystic, thus engaging students with real-world musical navigators in their aspirations to apprehend the musical world around them.

I also devote considerable attention in this chapter to the shadow patterns that preclude even moderate steps to reform in most music schools. I identify the inner workings of what I call “musical fundamentalism” and compare it to the more familiar religious and less familiar scientific fundamentalism (see next chapter). It is not that interpretive performers do not invoke transcendent experience; they, in fact, invoke at times powerful transcendent experiences, which are to be celebrated. It is because these temporary, transformational glimpses—or states—are not grounded in creative diversity and thus lack a conduit through which this experience may flow, be informed, and critically examined, from an all-quadrants perspective” that they are prone to fundamentalist interpretation. Meaning, that particular pathway is the “only, or at least the preferred avenue to this musical experience” (304) —or form of musical truth. (304) “Whereas the religious fundamentalist is bound by all manner of scriptural authority,” the musical fundamentalist is “bound by a vast treasury of ‘musical scriptures,’ in the form of (in the case of the Eurocanonic interpretive performance specialist) “composed-notated repertory (305).” While it goes without saying that all musical identities are prone to this tendency, identities that are grounded in more epistemologically diverse engagement provide tools whereby practitioners can liberate from these patterns in two central ways. One is expanded capacities to critically interrogate one’s own dogmas. Second entails capacities to appreciate multiple pathways towards inner-outer depth and scope.

This lays groundwork for centering a topic that has only grown in relevance and urgency since ICC appeared.

“I am talking about race, the complexities of which may be unmatched in music and musical study given the inextricable link between music, ethnicity and culture.”(337) Foreshadowing conversations that are increasingly prevalent in US music schools, I pose the question:

“Is musical academe racist?”

I go on to distinguish between “ethnocentrism and racism” by placing both forms of “deplorable behavior” and thinking along a continuum, and conclude that “there is little question that the field encompasses its full range (339). I further state:

Among the ironic aspects of the situation is that almost every college or university regularly issues strong proclamations of commitment to diversity, and that while music is a field uniquely equipped to play a leadership role in these efforts, musical academe arguably lags behind most other fields when it comes to this important principle (339).”

I also critique the curriculum committee as a key site that perpetuates conventional patterns of thinking and practice.

This statement sums up my thoughts:

The fact is, the conventional curricular model and corresponding curricular deliberations are weakly grounded in pedagogical principle, severely distanced from contemporary musical practice, reflect a minimal degree of critical inquiry about both the viability of the framework or the discourse itself, and tend to be driven more by the self-interests of departments (and/or faculty) than student needs. A curriculum in the arts that inhibits creativity, undermines self-sufficiency, promotes ethnocentrism and racism, and reifies an aesthetic/spiritual exclusivity that is rooted in inner mechanics notably similar to religious fundamentalism can hardly be seen to serve the best interests of students (344).

University of the Future

I not only situate the Music School of the Future within a new vision of higher education, I argue that a transformed music studies paradigm with Jazz, Improvisation and Consciousness/Meditation at its core will serve as a catalyst for the shift. In a section called “Tales of Two Epistemologies,” (349) I examine the parallel ordeals that advocates of improvisation in music and meditation in education at large (including music) have had to endure (and continue to endure). Particularly telling is that in both realms, the respective epistemology was, in earlier times, central—only to fade away under the weight of the Matrix of Materialism and object-mediated entrenchment. While it is common knowledge in music that the icons of the European tradition were consummate improvisers, less known, as the philosopher Pierre Hadot has elucidated, is that:

the systems of rational, logical thought and analysis that are attributed largely to ancient Greek and Roman schools of philosophy, and which the academic world regards as its roots, are but part of an exploratory scope whereby thinkers utilized contemplative methodologies to transcend the realm of ordinary mental functioning and penetrated to more silent and subtle intuitive ways of knowing (349).

I then critique the contemplative studies movement, where I delineate conventional, postmodern and integral evolutionary phases (the latter yet to take hold). (351)

I identify important parallels in contemporary musical and spiritual navigation, and the importance of grounding in tradition as a kind of epistemological and navigational anchor in the respective endeavors. Just as musicians can easily be distracted by superficial skimming, the same can happen in spiritual life, given the excess of pathways at our fingertips. However, solid interior foundations can work in tandem with tradition-specific engagement to yield optimal results. (358)

I critique tendencies in some contemplative circles to privilege a distinctly Westernized conception of Buddhism that, consistent with materialist inertia, constrain the broader picture to unfold. Confusion over the principle of *anatta*, or no self, is key; from an integral standpoint, *anatta* is properly understood to denote the relativistic nature of the personal self, or ego, not—as is commonly inferred—the denial of a transcendent Self. I reference the work of several leading thinkers—including Jim Harris, Stephen Bachelor, Owen Flanagan—who succumb to this pattern as examples of a Buddhist fundamentalism is afoot that, as an offshoot of its scientific counterpart (some sort of materialism often informs misreading of *anatta*), is as egregious as opposing kinds of religious fundamentalism. (382)

In what may be among the more provocative parts of the book, I challenge the policy of church-state boundaries, a cornerstone of American liberalism, and suggest that whatever this may have accomplished has been now achieved, and the time has now come to retract these imposed divisions. In response to concerns about rampant religious fundamentalism (I can already hear the howls of many academic liberals!), I argue that an integral approach to religion and religious discourse in our schools is actually the best antidote to fundamentalism. A key principle is the establishment of frameworks for religious inquiry that juxtapose diverse practices, and celebrate both commonalities as well as distinctions. When tradition-specific engagement opens up to trans-traditional inquiry, this—in a single stroke—both deepens and broadens religious experience and understanding. (385).

Tales of two fundamentalisms—scientific and religious and artistic

While religious fundamentalism is a frequent target of progressives, the notion of a scientific parallel—sometimes called “scientism” is far more elusive, particularly in the science-driven academy. The two fundamentalisms exacerbate one another in what Wilber calls a “pressure cooker” effect. The more that religious fundamentalists see the marginalization or outright dismissal of spiritual wisdom, they cling even more rigidly to their dogmatic perspectives even within the spiritual realm. This, in turn, impels scientific fundamentalists toward entrenchment in their anti-spirituality dogmas. Jazz art offers multiple avenues at healing the divide. Its capacities to swing between far-reaching mystical terrain, led by its long legacy of artists-mystics, and intensive attention to analytical and craft detail—hence, science-inspired inquiry—offers a general template for this bridge. Jazz’s capacities to transcend language and labeling, thereby helping individuals deeply interrogate terms such as “spirituality” and “science” is another tool. Closely related is a principle directly paralleling jazz’s often-precarious relationship with European classical tradition. Just as critique of the materialist overreach of Eurocanonic engagement does not constitute critique of the canon itself (nor interpretation or study thereof), critique of scientific and religious fundamental does not constitute critique of

science and religion *per se*. The concern lies simply in the dissociation of these spheres from the integral, co-evolutionary trinity. Einstein's dictum, "religion without science is blind, science without religion is lame" holds true.

Jazz and the Collapse of Materialism

An integral reading of jazz brings into focus several lines of inquiry that pose challenges to materialist ideology. Creativity is first. Materialism is hard-pressed to explain improvisatory creative expression in its multiple dimensions. The generation and exchange of ideas, and the evolution of an individual voice that is shaped by the totality of influences and factors—musical, socio-cultural, psychological, spiritual—that define the experience of the artist call for more expansive models of consciousness that span interior and exterior dimensions. The phenomenon of transcendence, or peak experience, places even greater strain on materialist ideologies that are tied to the physical, objective realm. When, moreover, we situate temporary episodes of transcendent within overarching models that include higher stages of creativity and consciousness development, especially when the sequence culminates in direct experience of the nondual nature and primacy of consciousness in overall creation, materialism encounters even more formidable difficulties. While the argument that subjective experience of nonduality does not constitute ontological proof therefore may be a tempting rebuttal, this argument actually invites a further integral criterion that ultimately seals materialism's fate. Here, perhaps ironically, I defer to science—that realm which materialists look to reify their truth claims, but more specifically, a branch of scientific research into extended capacities of consciousness, called psi phenomena, that yields empirical, and thus objective support for the viability of integral principles (as well as age-old views of consciousness across many global traditions). I provide an overview of 10 categories of psi and related research, including various types of discarnate consciousness (consciousness that transcends bodily death, e.g. out of body experiences), clairvoyance, psychokinesis, remote cognition, retrocausation, dream telepathy and other kinds of telepathy and intersubjective consciousness (375). While these do not constitute proof of the integral model, particularly its nondual, advaita precepts (consciousness is primary in the broader view of creation), they are so vastly more coherent with thinking in that direction than materialist accounts that they represent the ultimate *coup d'état* to the physicalist empire that has long colonized much of the academy. I do not see how materialism survives the fatal challenges the integral framework poses.

Among the psi taxonomy, to reiterate an earlier point, discarnate consciousness and intersubjective consciousness are particularly relevant to a deeper understanding of jazz and a jazz aesthetic. The first speaks to the depth of our creativity and its origins at the soul level, the second to the scope of our interactive capacities.

Planet Earth Takes a Solo: Prelude to Integral Afrofuturism

Humanity is at a crossroads. "The improvising ensemble called "humanity"—consisting of over seven billion members—needs to invoke new ways of thinking and action as it navigates its way through the chord changes of unprecedented complexity and scope that are unique to our time (397)."

In the final pages of *ICC*, I reflect on the ramifications of this statement for present challenges that confront our world. As I have intimated, collective consciousness is of particular interest, with parallels between enlivened intersubjective consciousness in improvisation, this involving enlivened intersubjective consciousness in large group meditation, coming into focus. Preliminary though promising studies suggest that large-scale collective meditation intensives may generate a harmonizing influence in urban settings that result in reduced crime, accident, and illness rates (402). Some visionaries have speculated about the ramifications of this intervention for terrorism, and its closely related epidemic of gun violence that has grown dramatically in the past few years.

Ramifications for the climate change crisis also come into view, particularly when viewed through the lens of a further psi capacity—mind-matter interaction, or psychokinesis (312). From studies that suggest consciousness, on at least subtle scales of creation, may be interactive with the material world extend potentially monumental environmental implications. I cite a delightful essay by consciousness-researcher Dean Radin, from the Institute of Noetic Sciences, where he envisions “teams of intention experts” who, specially trained, can impact weather and climate in a given region through consciousness modalities designed for this purpose (412).

To be sure, this raises the bar even further when it comes to my emphasis on the need for “anomaly centering” (403). Instead of knee jerk reactions, whether due to fear or ideological indoctrination, when we encounter ideas and phenomena at the outer edges of our imaginations, let us move these possibilities from the margins to front and center stage in our awareness. This makes possible a kind of critical interrogation that will enable us to either harness the evolutionary capacities inherent in the phenomena, or make informed, critically robust choices to look in other directions. The annihilation of the imagination that characterizes much academic practice is unsustainable and needs to give way to the opposite kind of educational result, for which consciousness evolution is key.

I also emphasize the need for this kind of consciousness development to evolve apace with sound ethical aspirations, and for this to inform corresponding technological development. The potential perils of Artificial Intelligence, and more advanced forms that are called AI+ (412) as measured by capacities for machines to be programmed with some kind of self-awareness, and of greater consequence, self-replicative features, may exceed even those of present climate crises. Ray Kurzweil, for example, amid his arguments for the inevitability and many positive aspects of the AI movement, also recognizes the possibility for the design of “self-replicating nano-devices” that could cause unthinkable kinds of destruction, about which David Chalmers elaborates when he writes of “the end of the human race, an arms race of warring machines, and the destruction of the planet.” (413).

Indeed, with the creative imagining that might give rise to solutions to existing problems comes the possibility for new problems. The way forward, however, is not to retreat from technological or other kind of innovation, but to unite scientific/technological progress with

spirituality/consciousness development. For which, to complete the integral trinity, the arts need to step up as a unifying vehicle.

I believe an integral understanding of jazz art reveals the idiom as a powerful exemplar for this transformative function. Here I propose a three-tiered model for jazz artistry and understanding that might be considered a post-integral framework that exemplifies the arts-driven integrative function. A surface tier encompasses transcultural navigation; underlying that is grounding in a primary culture—hence the tradition-specific/trans-traditional interplay (within which is the emulative/exploratory interaction). Yet more foundational—and let us always bear in mind that depictions of integral verticality are maps, not the actual territory—is engagement with a tradition, which maybe one’s primary lineage or some other, that is predicated on the primordial nature of sound in the cosmic wholeness. “Nada Brahma,” to invoke the Vedantic concept, and title of Joachim Berendt’s book: *The World is Sound* (264).

The notion of jazz as the first and perhaps quintessential “world music,” as we occasionally hear, takes on new meaning. For now, we are talking about a return to ancient notions of music, East and West, as intrinsically linked to the cosmic order, yet also situated within a contemporary context that is informed by a planetary cultural confluence that the ancients could have scarcely dreamed of. Reminded and inspired by the motto of the “AACM, Great Black Music—From ancient to the future” (157, 238), I thus envision jazz as the center of an emergent framework I propose as “Integral Afrofuturism.” I view as the highest priority for jazz research the celebration of and elaboration upon this principle.

“Let us recognize this treasure in our midst,” I conclude, “and harness its transformative resources in order that humanity may take its next evolutionary strides” (414).

¹ *Improvisation, Creativity and Consciousness: Jazz as Integral Template for Music, Education and Society* (SUNY, Albany). The page references used throughout the essay thus refer to this book, unless indicated otherwise by footnote.

² Proponents of subset of materialism called “emergence” will occasionally object, given their rightful (yet incomplete) recognition that consciousness, having emerged, can feed back and impact the physiology and thus represents a kind of subject-object unity. But this is not even remotely comparable to Vedantic advaitan nonduality in several fundamental ways. Key is its precept of a universal realm or field of consciousness as the source of all creation, second is the sequential unfolding of differentiated strata of creation, whereby the entirety of the physical world (not just aspects of personal physiology)—as Aurobindo puts it, the electron the atom, etc., all manifest from consciousness.

³ Alice Coltrane quoted in an interview by Stuart Nicholson, November 3, 2004, Interview with Alice Coltrane, available online at <http://bit.ly/2mV4M16>.

⁴ My most recent project is called International Consortium for Academic and Societal Transformation, or ICAST.