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## THE MORAL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MUSIC OF THE BLACK ATLANTIC

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Lydia Goehr poses a question integral to this essay: where does the essence of music, what I might even name its truth and morality, lie—"in the work itself, in its realization through performance, or in the interpretive act of listening to a work?"<sup>1</sup> I shall approach this question via a related question concerning how we are to distinguish two musical traditions, that of the Black Atlantic and that of the White Atlantic. Alain Locke provides an interesting perspective on the issue in his discussion of "Negro art": "Sooner or later," he writes, "the critic must face the basic issues involved in his use of risky and perhaps untenable terms like 'Negro art' and 'Negro literature,' and answer the much-evaded question unequivocally, who and what is the Negro?"<sup>2</sup>

Locke consistently argued against the notion that race designated certain distinctive physical, psychological, or spiritual traits that were inherited from some ancestral stock of the distant past, and which predetermined the culture of its descendants. Rather, he insisted that every group was made up of a plurality of individuals distinguished by class, intellect, personality, and talent. There was no ideal type that defined the standard for any racial group.<sup>3</sup>

Slavery, colonialism, anti-Semitism, and other forms of racism are examples of the many kinds of harm inflicted and justified by assuming that each race has inherited a predisposition for a certain type of behavior. Given such negative historical precedents, Locke wrestled with the quandary of whether we should continue to use notions of race at all. He concluded, however, that racial notions were useful, so long as they were purged of their fallacious essentialist elements. Locke saw no reason to deny the association of certain cultural products with certain groups so long as we recognize that such products always draw on contributions from diverse sources, and that the association between a particular group and its particular contributions is a contingent one. Acknowledging this, there should be no need to deny that people of African descent have led a movement that synthesized elements from Africa and Europe to create a vibrant and distinctive form of music, one that reflects their passage from slavery through segregation to the present.

Within "Negro" or African American music, Locke distinguished three forms: folk music, popular music, and classical music. Folk music referred primarily to spirituals and blues, produced as an immediate expression of conditions experienced without the aid of formal musical training. Popular music was typically produced by literate musicians using folk idioms, but for popular consumption. African-American classical music was European classical music recast to incorporate materials from the Negro folk tradition. Locke argued that the folk idioms of Negro

culture would be vindicated when transformed into “serious music” by Negro composers comparable to the likes of Dvorak, Bartok, Stravinski, and Ravel.<sup>4</sup> Popular music, including jazz, was significant primarily as a way station in this transformation. Locke considered musicians like Fletcher Henderson and Duke Ellington to be the midwives of Black music because of their ability to refine the crude materials of the folk tradition and bring it under the control of the formal techniques of the European musical tradition.<sup>5</sup> For Locke, Black music would only achieve its highest value when domesticated by the forms and techniques of Western classical music.<sup>6</sup>

Locke is right in insisting on the importance of acknowledging the contributions of the music of the Black Atlantic. But we should resist the further suggestion that the music of this tradition can only progress by being assimilated to the forms dominant in European classical music. To account for the distinctiveness of the music of the Black Atlantic, we need not look for some essential difference between it and the music of the “White Atlantic”; a divergence in the historical evolution of these musical forms will suffice.<sup>7</sup> Especially in the nineteenth century, composers of Western classical music began a “purist” tradition of considering “their works as discrete, perfectly formed, and completed products”<sup>8</sup> to be performed exactly as the composer indicated on the score. In contrast, Black Atlantic forms (such as spirituals, blues, jazz, R&B, rap, and hip-hop) remained oral, performance-based, and fluid.

Historically, the traditional music of every culture has begun in an oral form, though certain cultures subsequently developed literate traditions. However, apart from Coptic Christian music in Ethiopia, sub-Saharan Africa developed no indigenous written forms for notating their music. In nonliterate societies, music was functional and served an important role in the work, play, rituals, ceremonies, and other social practices of the people. While the traditional rhythmic, melodic, and lyrical forms were passed on from one generation to the next, the emphasis was on using these forms to make music in the present, with only secondary importance given to guaranteeing that music made in the present was exactly like that made in the past. Dance was an integral part of music making, for dancers not only followed the musician’s rhythms but contributed vital rhythmic and kinesthetic patterns in addition to those provided by the musicians. By dancing, singing, swaying, and clapping, the distinctions between musician, dancer, and audience were blurred and their contributions fused. And because the musical patterns were recreated from memory or created on the spot, the tendency to improvise was the rule rather than the exception.<sup>9</sup>

Historically, music in the African American tradition was performed in conjunction with dance, so that the involvement of the audience was just as important as the involvement of the musicians. This symbiotic and recursive relationship between musician and audience integrated patterns of movement, sound, mood, and attitude. Musicians and audience shared in the active creation of a visual, kinesthetic, and acoustical universe.

On the other hand, within European classical music, notation has become the principle medium in which creation and recreation take place, and performers have come to be viewed as simply transmitters of the composer’s message. The

score fixes the identity of a piece of music, and the role of the performer is to reproduce what is already prefigured in the score. This does not mean that there is no variation from performance to performance. Even when a musical composition is notated, there is a great deal in terms of pitch, dynamics, and tempo that is not specified by the script and hence may vary from performance to performance without altering the essential identity of the work being performed. But more important than the existence of variation is the significance of this variation, for variation could as easily be the result of chance as the result of creative intent.<sup>10</sup>

In the historical development of European classical music the range of variation allowed a performer has been progressively minimized. Indeed, as Goehr notes, the first obligation of the performer of Western classical music became to keep the performance rigidly aligned with the script, what she calls "*Werktreue* and *Texttreue*: to be true to a work is to be true to its score."<sup>11</sup> On the other hand, in the improvisatory traditions of Black Atlantic music, the range of variation has been progressively maximized. In blues, jazz, rock, and hip-hop, the music is expected to reflect the uniqueness of each performer and each situation, while maintaining a reference to an acoustical pattern recognizable to both performers and listeners. Improvisation situates the act of composition within the performance, not before it, and incorporates the ecology of the performance situation rather than being insulated and independent of it. Particularly in jazz, script may be used to structure a performance, but it exerts a secondary rather than primary place of honor.<sup>12</sup>

Much of modern European music has evolved in a direction that takes mathematics as its model. Just as mathematics attempts to articulate patterns and relationships that remain valid independent of circumstances, so music, once notated, is supposed to articulate patterns that are independent of the vagaries of any specific performance.<sup>13</sup> On the other hand, Black Atlantic music has evolved in a direction in which mathematical constructs have not been exemplary. Each performance is intended to create and recreate forms that reflect the uniqueness of the situation in which the forms are produced. Musicians like Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven were equally at home as both literate and oral composers, equally adept as composers in script or in instrumental improvisation. But the tendency of European music to rely increasingly on scores has marginalized the cultivation of improvisational abilities. In European classical music, cadenzas that were originally intended to display the performer's improvisatory skills have become written. In the Americas, art music has maintained this reliance on notation, even as it has attempted to incorporate African and Native American themes. However, in exemplary musical genres of the Black Atlantic like blues and jazz, "written text is not master but servant. . . . [I]t is the performance that counts, and the score is to be used when it is useful, and discarded when not."<sup>14</sup>

In jazz, big bands may appear to use arrangements much as symphony orchestras use scores. But this similarity is misleading. In the most famous jazz big bands, performances were not intended to reproduce some "original vision" of the composer or arranger as indicated in the score. Rather, each performance was an occasion for the musicians to reinterpret the score provided.<sup>15</sup> Duke Ellington, the epit-

ome of the sophisticated jazz orchestral composer, was almost entirely self-taught, and his writing did not adhere to textbook standards. His arrangements and compositions combined the impressionistic harmony of Ravel, Debussy, and Delius with the improvisatory talents of gifted musicians from within the jazz tradition.<sup>16</sup> Alain Locke admired Ellington for his ability to compose symphonic suites and control the unpredictable imagination of his players.<sup>17</sup> But Ellington was even more admired for the way he built compositions and arrangements around the unique sounds of his players. "Sometimes I shift parts right in the middle," Ellington said. "You see, the man has to match the music, in feeling, in character. No point in knowing the music unless you know the boys as individuals."<sup>18</sup>

Other leaders of large ensembles have departed even more radically from the mold of composers in the European tradition.<sup>19</sup> The approaches of Charles Mingus and Sun Ra to orchestral arranging and composing are excellent examples of using notated scores as a springboard to create a performance instead of as a mnemonic to re-create a vision. As a springboard, they are a guide around which a performance is to be constructed. The performer uses the script to create a rendition that is appropriate to the circumstances. It is a way of exercising the creative imagination. But used as a "mnemonic," notation functions more like a set of instructions that, when carefully followed, is supposed to help recover a musical event originally conceived by the composer and somehow timelessly embodied within the score.

There is a division of labor in classical notated music that is not unlike the division of labor that characterizes industrial processes in which each worker produces only a specialized and narrow part of the entire product. The designer of a product is different from the workers who produce it, while management and workers are different again from the merchants who sell and the consumers who buy the product. In the production of notated music, we find a similar division of labor between composer, performer, and audience. Commodification appears to merge musical production and consumption with industrial production and consumption. In modern Western culture, the composer and the scientist occupy positions of highest esteem, followed by the performer and the engineer and finally the consumer and the audience. Just as most performers are content to spend their lives recreating the patterns encrypted in scores by composers, so are engineers content to supply markets with the "benefits" of science. Audiences and consumers become mere passive recipients of products designed and produced by others.

Notational systems have transformed human cognitive abilities.<sup>20</sup> But as with any technology, it is important that we not allow their benefits to blind us to their costs.<sup>21</sup> When notation becomes the principal medium in which the creative act exhibits itself, there is the tendency to believe that composition manifests primarily in the act of writing.<sup>22</sup> In contrast, musicians of the Black Atlantic have not made scripts their primary vehicle for composition. Instead, their music has been disseminated primarily by means of person-to-person encounters and recordings, allowing the transfer of ideas without essential recourse to scripts and notation systems.<sup>23</sup>

As is typical of most oral traditions, music is not something composed by one person and performed by another. Rather, composition and performance are com-

bined, and a new musical entity is created on each occasion, reflecting the uniqueness of each performer and performance situation while maintaining its connection to designated musical forms. Improvisation requires that each performer meet the challenges presented both by sonic patterns within the music and by other factors in the performance situation. In this way, the music models the kind of performances individuals might conceivably show in dealing creatively with novel and unanticipated circumstances. It resists the pull toward standardization by inviting each individual to work out their response to circumstances both well known and novel.

Western art music is patronized by the elite of industrial culture and enjoys high social status because its values reinforce the values underlying a technological culture. The public defers to classical musicians and performers, as it does to scientists and engineers. Classical musicians reflect certain ordered, technical values that the public may not understand but nonetheless does respect. Encrypted in scores, a notated piece of music is treated as a permanent object with an existence that is independent of any particular performance. Like facts demonstrated under laboratory conditions, classical performances take place in concert halls insulated from extraneous influences. Experimental demonstrations and musical performances embody similar imperatives as modernity's models for reconstructing our physical, social, and personal worlds.<sup>24</sup>

Just as the status of classical musicians reflects the high status of scientists and engineers, so does the status of Black Atlantic music reflect the low status of workers and slaves. While the progeny of African-American chattel slaves have been emancipated and the progeny of the colonial subjects of Africa granted sovereignty, in both cases this amounts to little better than promotion to the status of wage-slaves in a global capitalist system. Marking this evolution from chattel slaves to wage slaves, the lament and protest of African Americans has become a symbol of the hidden downside of expanding capitalism, as it confronts more people of all races and places with the prospect of slavery.<sup>25</sup>

Blues, rock and roll, jazz, hip-hop, highlife, juju, samba, and other forms emanating from Black Atlantic music represent the cultural achievements of those who were among the most exploited, most degraded, and most excluded of modernity.<sup>26</sup> Their music has come to speak not only for Black people but for all who must recognize their dilemma as wage slaves, compelled to augment the power of the owners of capital simultaneously as they diminish their own. The music deriving from the progeny of chattel slaves and colonial subjects articulates a response to a condition that modernity exports and articulates throughout the world. As members of other racial and ethnic groups find themselves subjugated economically, socially, and personally, they often identify with the plight of Blacks.<sup>27</sup>

In many ways, the resistance of the Black Atlantic musical tradition to the notational excesses of modernity parallels the rejection by American pragmatism of key features of the Greek and Cartesian traditions presupposed in the European Enlightenment.<sup>28</sup> Pragmatism argues for a fallible and contextualized view of knowledge, one that emphasizes the need for plural perspectives and experimental inquiry. And by exemplifying a tradition of experimentalism that does not take techno-

science as its model, music provides a much-needed alternative to the emphasis on science in orthodox interpretations of pragmatism. Likewise, the oral nature of Black Atlantic music can serve as a corrective to the emphasis on scripted language and literacy by neo-pragmatic orientations.<sup>29</sup>

John Dewey considered music to be the quintessential art form, and he insisted on an important distinction between the product of art and the work of art.<sup>30</sup> For Dewey, the work of art is the activity by which experience is conceptualized within a sensuous medium (in the case of music, sound). A critical and essential part of this activity is that the artist be guided by the medium and context to something not totally anticipated: the unexpected turn, something that the artist does not definitely foresee. It is this aspect of a work of art that saves it from being mechanical. "It gives the spontaneity of the unpremeditated to what would otherwise be a fruit of calculation."<sup>31</sup>

In improvised music, the process of creation typically takes precedence over the product created. The musical entity is one that is composed on the spot, under the pressure of having to be appropriate both to the musical forms embedded within it and to the circumstances within which it is embedded. Unlike the composer in the classical tradition, the improviser cannot pause to reflect on, erase, or change what has been done in the course of a performance.<sup>32</sup> In improvised music, problems and solutions are produced spontaneously by the soloist and by other members of the group, both individually and in interaction. And in music intended for dance, both audience and musicians participate in the creation and resolution of problems posed on the spot. Musicians and audience merge in the process of composition.

An actual performance may be done daringly, carefully, tentatively, serenely, brashly, mechanically, with maximal or minimal virtuosity, dynamically, intuitively, et cetera. When the performance is done by a group, the participants may interact supportively, competitively, jokingly, condescendingly, reverently, et cetera. As Stephen Braude puts it, "members of a jazz group listening to a solo often exhibit a range of reactions similar to those found among participants in a conversation. They might exhibit surprise, boredom, delight, admiration, impatience, puzzlement, and many other reactions."<sup>33</sup> When composition and performance are combined in improvisation, music making exhibits characteristics that are slighted when composition and performance are maximally distinguished. Improvisers produce variations on themes, and though there might be an indefinite number of variations, not all attempts are appropriate and successful.

Pragmatism stresses that the properties we attribute to objects must equally be attributed to ways of experiencing that are shaped by personal and social as well as physical aspects of our environment.<sup>34</sup> The attempt to derive an objective portrayal of reality that excludes personal and social factors is condemned by pragmatists as an endemic error of Greek and modern philosophy. It is thus important that we not be deceived by the lure of either ideal truth or ideal beauty. We always operate from within a perspective shaped by personal and historical circumstance.<sup>35</sup>

My purpose is not to deny that notation and scripts provide benefits unlikely to be attained without them. Indeed, it is difficult to conceive of coordinating the per-

formance of a hundred musicians without a score, or of building an aircraft carrier without a blueprint. Nonetheless, recognizing such benefits should not blind us to the costs of confining our most creative activities to notational forms. A central tenet of pragmatism is that science and art are activities that are meant to enhance human experience rather than discover objective truth and ideal beauty. But what might enhance our lives is always a matter of context: we are more likely to need water in a drought than in a flood. It is likewise with the modes of expression used within the arts, and particularly within music. Modernity has created a need for the spontaneous composition of improvisation in order to counterbalance the trend toward the reflexive composition of notational encryption.

Dewey held that an artistic act was not preconceived and predetermined, but “spontaneous, unexpected, fresh, and unpredictable.”<sup>36</sup> For Dewey, the work of art is the process by which sensuous material is transformed into a locus of meaningful experiences and embodies a level of experimentation and risk taking that is characteristic of our most meaningful activities. Art, at its best, is a mode of experimentation that opens up new ways of experiencing reality.<sup>37</sup> As such, Dewey rejected the tendency to confine experimentation to scientists in the laboratory:

The artist is compelled to be an experimenter because he has to express an intensely individualized experience through means and materials that belong to the common and public world. The problem cannot be solved once for all. It is met in every new work undertaken. Otherwise an artist repeats himself and becomes esthetically dead. Only because the artist operates experimentally does he open new fields of experience and disclose new aspects and qualities in familiar scenes and objects.<sup>38</sup>

One commentator was led to conclude: “It is almost as if Dewey was attempting to articulate a blues or jazz aesthetic as a basis for American artistic practice.”<sup>39</sup>

We may view music as a drama created by the interplay of tonal and rhythmic motifs. By using acoustical patterns to create deviations and resolutions within a universe of sounds, music simulates conflicts, alliances, disappointments, and triumphs. Stories are told without words within an unfolding drama. Many have suggested that music making simulates social interactions. The creation of tensions and subsequent resolutions within music provides us with important models for dealing with tensions and their resolutions in our personal lives. But it is an unfortunate consequence of an overly intellectual heritage that we seriously believe that moral dilemmas are best resolved by an appeal to explicitly formulated rules and commandments. Music challenges this presumption by providing an intuitive model of the many ways in which disharmony can be both produced and resolved, a model that is not fixed and inflexible.<sup>40</sup>

From an Aristotelian perspective, morality revolves around the notion that “the wise and virtuous person will use life’s ‘materials’ as well as possible.”<sup>41</sup> And our aesthetic and moral judgments derive not from static compositions or Platonic forms, but from effort and activity in which “choice resides in a perception that responds flexibly to the situation at hand.”<sup>42</sup> And how we choose need not be reducible to a rule or law.<sup>43</sup>



I believe that Black Atlantic music is meaningful, not merely because of the peculiar relationships between its tonal and rhythmic elements, but more importantly because it provides a model that resists the radical separation of composer from performer and performer from audience that has become the norm in European classical music and that mirrors the growing separation of producers, owners, and consumers of wealth in modern society. It also resists the replacement of the spontaneous character of oral interactions with the reflexive experiences of a culture based on encrypted literate forms. It is a music that encourages agency and resists the transformation of individuals into passive observers and consumers. It manifests what Martha Nussbaum calls “non-scientific deliberation”—thought not intended to be universalized, but intended to reflect the peculiar influences of peculiar entities within peculiar circumstances. In this way, the significance of music making in the Black Atlantic tradition transcends the lifestyles and declarations of its performers, and provides an icon of how to live a moral life.<sup>44</sup>

## Notes

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- 1 – Lydia Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), p. 275.
- 2 – Alain Locke, “Who and What is ‘Negro’?” in Leonard Harris, ed., *The Philosophy of Alain Locke: Harlem Renaissance and Beyond* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1989), p. 209.
- 3 – The practice of Black music in the blues and jazz tradition severs the essentialist’s link between race and culture. One need not be European to master forms that derive from Europe, nor need one be an African in order to master forms that derive from Africa. There are many Africans who are serious students of the Western musical tradition, just as there are many Europeans who are serious students of African musical traditions and their diasporic extensions. See also Paul Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic: Modernity and Double Consciousness* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1993).
- 4 – See Paul Burgett, “Vindication as a Thematic Principle in the Writings of Alain Locke on the Music of Black Americans,” in *Music in the Harlem Renaissance*, ed. Samuel A. Floyd, Jr. (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1993), pp. 29–30.
- 5 – Acknowledging the universal appeal of jazz to non-Negroes, Locke lauded white musicians such as George Gershwin and Benny Goodman for becoming

“masters of jazz, not only rivaling their Negro competitors musically but rising more and more to commercial dominance of the new industry” (Burgett, “Vindication as a Thematic Principle,” p. 35).

- 6 – Thus, Locke insisted that “Eventually the art music and the folk-music must be fused in a vital but superior product” (Burgett, “Vindication as a Thematic Principle,” p. 37).
- 7 – What does not distinguish them is the view offered by Jane Duran and Earl Stewart, “Toward an Aesthetic of Black Musical Experience,” *Journal of Aesthetic Education* 31 (1) (Spring 1997). See my commentary in the *Journal of Aesthetic Education*, Fall 2001. In the analysis that follows, I am indebted to the work of Ben Sidran, *Black Talk* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1971), and Christopher Small, *Music of the Common Tongue* (New York: Riverrun Press, 1994).
- 8 – Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, p. 222.
- 9 – Otto Karolyi, *Traditional African and Oriental Music* (New York: Penguin, 1998), chap. 1, pp. 3–7, 51.
- 10 – In computer programs such as Band-in-a-Box, variation is programmed, so that harmonically acceptable melodic alternatives are randomly substituted into performances. This is done by employing notation-based rules to generate tokens of a type. But though the tokens are recognizably different, they remain simulations of improvisatory music, not improvised re-creations.
- 11 – Goehr, *The Imaginary Museum of Musical Works*, p. 231.
- 12 – In jazz, the exemplar of improvisatory forms, the primary place of honor goes to the imaginative re-synthesis of a distinctive mix of melodic, harmonic, and rhythmic patterns. See Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, p. 231.
- 13 – “The European tends to think of music primarily in terms of entities, which are composed by one person and performed to listeners by another. These entities, pieces, or songs which the musician regards as his primary responsibility to reproduce and to hand on as nearly as possible as he received them, are fixed in their overall identity” (Christopher Small, *Music of the Common Tongue*, p. 45).
- 14 – Small, *Music of the Common Tongue*, p. 236. John Coltrane once said of the way Thelonious Monk taught him his tunes: “He would rather a guy would learn without reading because you feel it better and quicker that way” (*ibid.*, p. 231).
- 15 – In this regard, it is instructive to contrast big bands such as those of Paul Whiteman, Glenn Miller, Tommy Dorsey, and Stan Kenton with those of Duke Ellington, Count Basie, Charles Mingus, and Sun Ra. It was quite common for performances in the latter group to be built around the strengths of particular individuals (Small, *Music of the Common Tongue*, p. 239; my thanks to Art Cromwell for a timely tour of this music).

- 16 – Wilfred Mellers, *Music in a New Found Land: Themes and Developments in the History of American Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), pp. 320 ff.
- 17 – Speaking of Ellington, Locke writes: “Someone had to devise a technique for harnessing this shooting geyser, taming this wild well” (Burgett, “Vindication as a Thematic Principle,” p. 36).
- 18 – Mellers, *Music in a New Found Land*, p. 318.
- 19 – For musicologist Wilfred Mellers, Ellington was “a new type of composer” who wrote “for a particular group of human beings, each with his own distinctive characteristics” (Mellers, *Music in a New Found Land*, p. 318).
- 20 – See the work of Jack Goody, Walter Ong, and Marshall McLuhan.
- 21 – “Literacy is a good servant but a bad master,” writes Small, “and if Afro-American musicians have in the main succeeded in avoiding becoming bound to their past it is largely because of their ability to keep the written notes in their place” (Small, *Music of the Common Tongue*, pp. 244–245; for a more detailed presentation of the costs and benefits of literacy, see chap. 8, “On Literacy and Non-literacy”).
- 22 – Small, *Music of the Common Tongue*, p. 238.
- 23 – Recordings preserve actual performances rather than the blueprint for how a performance is to take place. And they remind us that writing is not the only means of creating, developing, and preserving a conceptual legacy (*ibid.*, pp. 240 ff.).
- 24 – Small writes: “The concert hall performance affirms and celebrates the values of the industrial state, in all its singleness of vision.” And further: “Those who hold power in our society . . . give their support to the activities of musicians . . . whom they look upon as natural allies and vehicles for those values they hold important. . . . The setting of the concert Hall . . . can be relied upon to neutralize any dissent and assimilate it into the mainstream of middle class musik-ing” (*ibid.*, p. 178).
- 25 – The prospect of being transformed into wage-slaves. Explaining why he walked off a minimum-wage job, a street criminal responded: “Society needs niggers, and they’ll take ‘em where they can find ‘em, regardless of color. But I’m not going to do it!” (quoted in Eric Schneider, *Vampires, Dragons, and Egyptian Kings: Youthgangs in Postwar New York* [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999]). In the modern world most of us survive by becoming somebody’s nigger. Artists in general, and musicians in particular, represent those who refuse to spend their life doing what they do not find self-fulfilling.
- 26 – Small, *Music of the Common Tongue*, p. 187.
- 27 – It is in this sense that I understand Ben Sidran’s claim that “there was a need in white culture for what the Black culture had to offer” (Ben Sidran, *Black Talk*, p. 32).

- 28 – It is in this sense that we can understand Gilroy’s claim that the experience of slavery makes African Americans the first truly modern people (Gilroy, *The Black Atlantic*, p. 221).
- 29 – “Seeing the linguistic turn as a step forward rather than a dead end, Rorty dogmatically refuses to accept any philosophy in which something other than language . . . plays an important role” (James Kloppenberg, “Pragmatism: An Old Name for Some New Ways of Thinking?” in Morris Dickstein, ed., *The Revival of Pragmatism* [Durham: Duke University Press, 1998], p. 93).
- 30 – “The product of art—temple, painting, statue, poem—is not the work of art. The work takes place when a human being cooperates with the product so that the outcome is an experience that is enjoyed because of its liberating and ordered properties” (John Dewey, *Art as Experience* [New York: Pedigree Books, 1980], p. 214). I have added, as examples of products of art, scores and recordings.
- 31 – Dewey, *Art as Experience*, p. 139. Of course, even improvisation can be done in a manner that exhibits mechanical craftsmanship rather than artistic creativity, as when musical patterns learned from exercise books or recordings are combined to satisfy formalized notions of propriety. But, in the tradition of jazz and blues, such activity has always been considered second rate and derivative.
- 32 – Lee B. Brown, “Feeling My Way: Jazz Improvisation and Its Vicissitudes—A Plea for Imperfection,” *Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 58 (2) (Spring 2000): 114. As Brown characterizes it, the improviser is in a continuum of *forced choice*.
- 33 – Stephen Braude, “The Language of Improvisation,” *International Jazz Archives Journal* 1 (2) (1994): 8.
- 34 – “The favoring of cognitive objects and their characteristics at the expense of traits that excite desire, command action and produce passion, is a special instance of a principle of selective emphasis which introduces partiality and partisanship into philosophy” (John Dewey, *Experience and Nature* (New York: Dover, 1958), pp. 224–225).
- 35 – Dewey, *Experience and Nature*, p. 29.
- 36 – *Ibid.*, p. 359.
- 37 – For Dewey, true art “is a device in experimentation carried on for the sake of education. It exists for the sake of a specialized use, use being a new training of modes of perception. The creators of such works of art are entitled, when successful, to the gratitude that we give to inventors of microscopes and microphones; in the end, they open new objects to be observed and enjoyed. This is a genuine service; but only an age of combined confusion and conceit will arrogate to works that perform this special utility the exclusive name of fine art” (*ibid.*, p. 392).

- 38 – Dewey, *Art and Experience*, p. 144.
- 39 – George Hutchinson, *The Harlem Renaissance in Black and White* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 51.
- 40 – see Kathleen Higgins, *The Music of Our Lives* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991), chaps. 5, 6, 7.
- 41 – Martha C. Nussbaum, *The Fragility of Goodness* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), p. 333.
- 42 – *Ibid.*, p. 312.
- 43 – *Ibid.*, p. 325.
- 44 – *Ibid.*, p. 296.