

Sound, Music, Meaning

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Sound, Music, Auditory system

- Music and autonomy
- Interpenetration of music and the general auditory environment
- A single auditory system
- Real and virtual environments

Velázquez: "Las Meninas" (1656)



Five Ecological Principles

- Environmental information (e.g. sound) is highly structured and specifies objects/events in relation to perceivers
- Perception is a developing (evolving & learned) 'attunement' to the environment
- Interdependence of perception and action
- Affordances (opportunities for action) and meanings
- No sharp division between nature and culture: culture 'built on' nature

Affordances

I have coined this word as a substitute for *values*, a term which carries an old burden of philosophical meaning. I mean simply what things furnish, for good or ill. What they *afford* the observer, after all, depends on their properties. . . . [T]he human observer learns to detect what have been called the values or meanings of things, perceiving their distinctive features, putting them into categories and subcategories, noticing their similarities and differences and even studying them for their own sakes, apart from learning what to do about them.

(Gibson 1966, 285)

I mean by something that refers to both the environment and the animal in a way that no existing term does. It implies the complementarity of the animal and the environment.

(Gibson [1979] 1986, 122)

Nature and Culture

In the study of anthropology and ecology, the “natural” environment is often distinguished from the “cultural” environment. As described here, there is no sharp division between them. Culture evolved out of natural opportunities. The cultural environment, however, is often divided into two parts, “material” culture and “non-material” culture. This is a seriously misleading distinction, for it seems to imply that language, tradition, art, music, law, and religion are immaterial, insubstantial, or intangible, whereas tools, shelters, clothing, vehicles, and books are not. Symbols are taken to be profoundly different from things. But let us be clear about this. There have to be modes of stimulation, or ways of conveying information, for any individual to perceive anything, however abstract. . . . No symbol exists except as it is realized in sound, projected light, mechanical contact, or the like. All knowledge rests on sensitivity.

(Gibson 1966, 26)

Three sound clips

Clip 1



Clip 2



Clip3



Yves Daoust: *Mi Bémol*

- Bouncing object(s) (hard, metal/glass)
- Eflat (= *mi bémol*)
- Squeaky swing
- Crowd
- Talk
- Broadcast reality / present reality
- Inside / outside (space)
- Celebration & amazement
- Weather
- 'Nature' (pastoral) / 'Culture' (urban)
- Arch-form
- Various kinds of 'narratives' - event sequences



Motion, Embodiment, Subjectivity

- Real motion and Virtual motion
- Motion and the presence of a body/subject
- Relativity and motion: Who/what is moving?
(cf. Doppler effect - fire engine or level crossing)
- Subject/Object - and in-between/undecided

Fatboy Slim (aka Norman Cook):
“Build it up - tear it down”



Goldfrapp: *Felt Mountain* (2000):
“Deer Stop”

‘Outer’ and ‘Inner’ space/motion
Physical and psychic space/motion



Summary

- Continuity between everyday and musical sounds
 - Impact of recording
- ‘What’s going on?’ as primary
 - Diversity of ‘things going on’ (instruments, actions, structures, virtual worlds...)
- Mutualism of perceiver and environment
 - many ways of listening, though not complete relativism
- Real and virtual environments
 - Outer and inner soundscapes
- Music and subjectivity: subject/object indeterminacy