

**University of Manitoba – Department of Philosophy / School of Art
Theories of Creativity - Fall 2018**

Reminder of the Reading-Assignment 08 – for session Oct. Nov. 19th
(READING WEEK IN BETWEEN)

As announced in class, for the next session I would like you to prepare two texts:

- a) **George Lewis: Too Many Notes: Computers, Complexity and Culture,**
- b) **Steven Nachmanovich: It Don't mean a thing.**

The following week we discuss Gregory Bateson: “A Theory of Play and Fantasy”, and “Toward a Theory of Schizophrenia”.

George E. Lewis is Professor of American Music and Chair of Composition at Columbia University New York. – He is also a versatile Jazz Musician, Improviser, Computer Musician, Trombone Player.

<https://music.columbia.edu/bios/george-e-lewis>

Reading/discussing George Lewis on Improvisation with Computers - and Nachmanovich as a musical improviser and student of Gregory Bateson prepares us:

1) to discuss the cognitive/mental/physical process of *improvisation* as one of the most basic and omnipresent acts of creativity. Questions and perspectives for reading David Lewis:

What kind of historically entrenched contemporary assumptions on art, culture, production, gender, artwork-organization, creative agency, aesthetics etc. are *challenged* here, explicitly or implicitly? This Afro-American author, professor, and artist provides material to discuss *aesthetic principles* in the arts *not as something universally given*, but as *constructed*: representing a particular world-view and embodying social and *power-structures* (see for instance Lewis p. 3) (keywords: post-colonial aesthetics, Afro-American aesthetic, Black Music, Eurocentrism...)

2) to discuss it as a form of enactive, embodied cognition-*as-creativity*

3) to introduce a particular form of improvising computer program that critically reflections on several unconscious assumptions regarding computers and creativity (compared for instance with the reflections by Margaret Boden on computers and creativity)

4) give a first introduction into the thought of Gregory Bateson, who offers one of the most powerful theories of creativity - and how it potentially relates to mental disfunction)

Bateson relates creativity to “play”, the analog-digital distinction, logical fallacies (being a-logical or illogical intentionally, so to speak), and to *mental disorders such as schizophrenia* (which is in fact emphatically seen in Bateson not a *disorder* but an *alternative* order – with Freud and David Bohm).

All four texts were distributed in class and are uploaded on UMLearn. (Texts for next class are in the folder SESSION 06, texts for the following session in folder SESSION 07). If you want to delve into Bateson already now: I also uploaded in the latter folder a text by Corey Anton, explaining Bateson’s theory - among other topics with regard to the analog-digital distinction as well as the Theory of Types. (This sounds more threatening as it is. ;-) – In general: Anton is a good introduction into Gregory Bateson.

As usual: Please let me know if you have any questions!

And as mentioned: Bateson is difficult on the surface, but utterly fascinating and relevant once one knows more and sees some bigger patterns. So: Be patient with yourself and with the texts for this and next week while reading and read it more than once. ;-)