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Johan Fornäs

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MOVING ROCK

Youth and pop in late modernity

By Johan Fornäs

What is moving in rock and pop? This question concerns both what levels change in the popular music arena, and how music can initiate changes inside and outside itself. Revolution in popular music can mean radical transformations of music itself, as well as the way in which social and psychic changes express themselves in music. Musical forms can go through revolutionary changes, and musical content can thematize revolutions.

Popular music is a very wide category comprising all music identified primarily with modern industrial circuits of mass distribution and use. Pop is an unstable label for popular music as it contains intrinsically electrified tunes directed primarily at young people. Rock is another, partly intersecting subfield of music, a subfield of Afro-American inspiration, which once had a youth orientation. I will here discuss this complex field in great generality, pointing at some tendencies that seem to be important for more than single artists or subcultures.

Many studies of popular music vacillate between a distanced cynicism and short-sighted apologetics. Fans claim rock or pop to be revolutionary, liberating or brilliantly post-modern, while bitter ex-fans join uninformed highbrow academics in dismissing it as a piece of commercial crap machinery. But in all studies of cultural phenomena, distance needs to interplay with empathy, criticism with understanding. No really incisive criticism is possible without a deep understanding of its object. Only by (temporarily) identifying with pop users can the critic work out effective critical analyses of pop, and only by then producing a distance between the arenas of theoretical discourse and popular music can he or she achieve real understanding.

One-sided empathy can be too subjective, blocking insights into suppressed aspects of the pop process. However, if it is based on personal antipathies which have

been given theoretical legitimation, one-sided distance can also be too subjective. To avoid both types of subjectivism no objectivating escape into a subject-free territory of hard facts is possible. As Habermas (1984, first chapter) points out, cultural processes can only be understood through a subjective involvement in the structures of meaning studied. The ideal is not to keep personal feelings out, but to let engaged closeness confront critical self-reflection.

In order to understand how rock moves, what meanings and functions popular music has, I therefore suggest that we enter the life world of its users and actors: listeners, musicians and mediators. This world of action and interaction is stratified along several dimensions. To reduce a cultural phenomenon to one dimension can help to refine its constituent concepts but all such 'nothing-but' analyses miss important levels. Rock is never 'nothing-but' a commercial apparatus of music industry and commodities, a symbolic field of habitus, dispositions and cultural capital, or a flow of desires or needs.

Modern popular music is positioned in a social structure where two main systems - the commercial market and the bureaucratic state, with money and power as means of regulation - have become differentiated from the everyday life world with its inter-subjective communication forms of symbolic language (in words, images, music etc). Music consumption and rock playing are activities where systemic forces meet life world demands for meaning and communication.¹

Cultural forms like popular music always relate to money and power. A rock tune is an exchange value in a capitalist market, and rock users are commodity consumers. People can and must use music to express and strengthen their position in social hierarchies. But cultural processes cannot be reduced to strategic, instrumental and goal-oriented types of action. Popular music is never 'nothing but' exchange value or cultural capital. Individuals and groups using popular music are situated in a life world composed of culture, society and personalities, where they also use inter-subjective communication to develop meaning, solidarity and identities.

Since we cannot say everything at once, we have to work with partial models. However, we should not always stay within the predictable limits of well-established

theoretical systems, but should try to draw new lines in different places, by being disloyal disciples to more than one master thinker and by combining concepts operating on different levels. If such montage work is cleverly done, the result, far from being superficial eclecticism, will be a creative *bricolage* where theoretical elements from various traditions are put into new and fruitful contact in order to shed light on multi-layered aspects of culture.

Such a multi-dimensional analysis will be exemplified here by examining how cultural modernization is expressed through revolutionary changes in the field of power and resistance in pop and rock. What are its sources, use values, learning processes and mobilizing potentials? How are questions of identity, resistance and critique; of groups, movements and audiences; of psychology, politics and aesthetics; of micro, macro and meta inter-related?

My discussion will build upon two lines of my research. Recently two colleagues and I completed a research project on the meanings of rock music for 'ordinary' young people in Sweden. For several years we observed some twenty teenagers in three amateur rock groups, joining rehearsals and gatherings, carefully analyzing their music, and conducting individual and group interviews with the teenagers, their parents and teachers. The resulting model indicated not only how some themes in micro-cultures relate to social life conditions, and how music is used for the construction of individual and collective adolescent identities, but also, against the background of class, gender and modernized everyday life, which learning processes music making induces (Fornäs *et al.* 1988, 1989).

Illustration: Self-portrait of a Stockholm band at about thirteen years of age (cartoon from a fanzine made by the band itself in 1982). A media figure from the world of comic strips here seems to find it unusually hard to penetrate into the peer group's own room. The text reads: "This is how our practice room, also known as the concert house, now looks. The egg boxes are for damping the sound. It is no use your coming there and knocking at the door, 'cause we will not open it, as you can see in the picture."

Before that, I studied, on a macro-level, more explicitly political forms of music such as the Swedish alternative music movement of the seventies and music in the new youth movements of the eighties. This addressed the ways in which music is involved in the forming of counter movements and resistance to dominant power structures, and the ways in which rock is used by such movements (Fornäs 1979, 1985).

Four levels

The uses of music in everyday communication processes touch upon three worlds, in addition to the two systemic forces. First, they concern the external world of material facts and objective life conditions. Second, music use has to do with our social world of inter-subjective relations and norms. Third, music relates to each individual's internal world of subjective identities, need structures and ideals.

Music is a human activity form centred around non-verbally organized and meaningful sounds, but also involving verbal as well as visual messages. Music is communicative interaction through the material and tools of a certain type of symbol: sounds. This fourth, cultural level is itself part of the second, social and inter-subjective world, but it intrinsically engages all three worlds. Musical, visual and verbal symbols, languages, styles and aesthetic forms relate inter -textually to each other, but also to the objective world by making statements, to the social world by shaping relations and norms, and to the subjective world by expressing psychic states and producing experiences.

Fundamental changes in the same dimensions can be called material, social, psychic and cultural revolutions. In our time popular music is involved in such revolutionary changes. Let us go deeper into each of these levels, using examples from my own research, to see which different forms of sources, learning, change and resistance exist on the objective, social, subjective and cultural levels.

Music and the objective world

First there are *external* conditions of music: material, technological, economic and institutional factors delineating relatively given frames for music use. I say 'relatively' given because only external nature is 'given' to human society as a whole, while technology, economy and political institutions are human products that are only experienced as objective by single individuals or groups. They are the result of an objectivating process emanating from the two great systems. Music technology, the music industry and market structures to a certain degree are external and *objective* conditions for music making and consumption, as are other aspects of musicians' and users' life conditions. But this does not mean that these aspects are stable, for there are radical changes also taking place in the objective world.

In capitalism, technology tends to take the fetishist form of an independent, semi-natural machinery. Man made technology appears and functions as second nature. This fetishization is real enough, since it steers people's actions, but it is also a false ideology, since it hides the socio-cultural determinants of technology. In rock and media writing, technological change is too often treated as an independent variable, a pure cause of cultural developments. The invention of the synthesizer and video, for example, is usually depicted as the main motor behind (post)modern pop tendencies: 'If the meaning of rock has changed, from youth counterculture to shopcounter culture, it is because of technological developments and demographic shifts' (Frith 1988:92). I think, first, that there are processes other than the technological and demographic which are just as important, and which give them their meaning and effects. Second, qualified theories of technological and demographic change clearly show how each is in its turn strongly determined by socio-cultural processes. Neither technology nor demography is a pure and solid natural phenomenon which simply causes cultural ones. If for example the proportion of teenagers in the population diminishes, what is the reason for that, and do teenagers then become more or less important socially and culturally? If new media forms change consumption patterns, why are these media produced and spread at precisely that moment

and in which of many possible forms are they developed? Of course technological changes have effects, but not as primary, independent factors.

Economic and organizational factors of music commodity production are also important for pop developments in pop, but they are not independent variables either. The commodity form exerts an influence on popular musical aesthetics, but it does not definitely or solely determine music use and meaning.²

Some aspects of popular music use are indisputedly directed towards an objective, external reality. Musicians, as well as listeners, get knowledge of things in the world and in the musical sphere. Rock bands have to learn how to handle the band's economy and acquire technical skills on their instruments. In this way music use includes cognitive, administrative and practical *learning processes* concerning the ability to handle objectively existing phenomena, judged by the criteria of truth and effectiveness.

A problem with the capitalist form of modernization is that goal-oriented rationality, upheld by systemic demands, tends to disturb meaning production in the life world. The tendency for these continually expanding systems to *colonize* the life world produces problems and crises in the cultural sphere. These developments, inherent in modern society, have reached new levels during the last decades. Postmodernists are often good at describing the symptoms of these processes, but the term postmodernity is misleading in that it suggests that the forces of modernity are broken and changed into something completely different. In fact, modernity has been radicalized and generalized, and we are not (yet) in a new epoch. Rather we are in a new phase of modernity which I call *late modernity*.

For a long time, rock and pop seemed to fall exclusively between the commercial music industry and the everyday life of peer groups and subcultures. In today's Sweden this has started to change as the state system has begun to intervene, and local authorities, study organizations, schools and social workers have started rock projects. Where capital demands profit maximization, the state uses pop and rock for purposes of integration and social control: to bring up the young and to lessen drug use and criminality. This new instrumentalization of and goal orientation in creative activities offers resources but it

also leads to problems that induce new counter movements. Peer group music use is now formed not only by subjective needs meeting market interests, but also by rules imposed by institutions under pressure from state demands. Teenage rock bands in Sweden increasingly have to formulate specific prior goals, use textbooks and report to those who control the money and the venues. We are used to witnessing youth counter cultures in endless struggles against commercialism and domination by the music industry. In the nineties such polar conflicts will probably be widened to a more complex, triangular field including both systems, sometimes opposing each other, sometimes uniting against social and cultural movements in the life world.

Around 1970 a youth music movement took form in Sweden, related to but not identical with parallel movements in domestic and international youth culture such as the hippie or student counter cultures. Because of the strong central state apparatus, strong and institutionalized popular movements, a rapidly modernized welfare society and a comparatively weak national music industry, unprepared to meet the sudden and unexpected rise of young domestic bands demanding channels to get their music out to a curious audience, the Swedish movement was unusually strong and highly organized on a national basis. The vacuum in the music industry created a space for the rise of self-organized alternative structures. For some five years this movement built up an apparatus of oppositional bands, music festivals, local clubs, record companies and a music press. The music movement was defined primarily in political rather than stylistic terms, so that it was not a homogeneous subculture but a mixture of several styles meeting in a common counter-public sphere (see Fornäs 1979).

In 1970 two outdoor music festivals in Stockholm first signalled the existence of this movement and its climax came in 1975 when an Alternative Song Contest was arranged in opposition to the Eurovision Song Contest being held in Stockholm, after Abba's 'Waterloo' had won that contest the year before. Sometimes music groups worked with theatre groups, as, for example, in the 'Tent Project' of 1977, where an ensemble of eighty actors and musicians toured the country in a large circus tent with a big music theatre show on the history of the Swedish working class. It was seen and heard by

100,000 people and presented on LP and film, but was soon felt to be a final manifestation of a movement dissolving in a multitude of different directions, rather than a beginning of something new (see Fornäs 1985).

A number of local independent clubs, often called 'music forum', were united in a national umbrella organization called 'The Contact Network for Non-Commercial Music' which still exists and is quite strong, although it now has a more vague ideological programme. Record companies identifying with the movement formed independent record distribution networks which are still active today. In 1978 their market share was 7 percent of all phonogram releases (Wallis and Malm 1984, p. 125). The alternative music press of the seventies was dominated by one paper, called 'The Power of Music' (*Musikens Makt*, 1973-80). In the late seventies, the punk wave gave rise to a multitude of small fanzines.

Illustration: 'The Power of Music ... is greater than one thinks', drawing by Kaianders Sempler, mid-1970s.

This movement had a closedness, a too simple dualism between good and bad, that was traditional and is now completely outdated. Its longing for homogeneous totalities led to frustrating internal quarrels over the 'correct line' and to a rigid and destructive 'camp mentality' (see Negt and Kluge 1972; Fornäs 1979). Every counter-movement probably has to start with some elements of closedness: to start moving they have to define themselves as subjects in contrast to something else. However, this position becomes dangerous if it becomes frozen and permanent. Movements die when they continue to build walls around themselves for too long.

Punk and other movements of the eighties tried desperately to avoid such stiffness, and, today, rock and youth culture are arenas which are highly differentiated internally. Nevertheless, some collective institutional forms built in the seventies are still important objective potentials for a creative and oppositional Swedish musical life, and new counter-structures have been shaped in the eighties. One of the groups in our study

was situated in a 'music house' where the development and maintenance of oppositional practices was possible. The subcultural counter-public sphere protected them from systemic pressures and offered practical and cultural means for alternative communication and meaning production. Another band rehearsed in a small cottage standing in the garden of a parent, far from any counter-public spheres, and found it far more difficult to escape from the pressures to conform emanating from parents and school.

On the objective level, *resistance* thus takes the form of objectivized organizational structures built up as *counter powers* or *counter-institutions* organizing material production and restructuring spaces for oppositional social and cultural practices. Music movements shape counter-public spheres where systemic pressures, like profit orientation and/or bureaucratic authority, can (temporarily) be resisted and where the critical and mobilizing potentials inherent in youth cultural practices such as playing rock can be strengthened.

Music and the social world

A second level concerns truly *social* aspects such as *inter-subjectively shared* norms and relations. Neither purely external rules nor purely subjective ideas are real norms. Norms are shared by several subjects, that is, they are inter-subjective. The same applies for social groupings. To produce this inter-subjectivity there does not have to be a universal consensus; a sharing between some individuals is sufficient.

A new cluster of *learning processes* in music use is directed towards this shared social world. In collectively consuming or producing music, groups have to handle conflicts and test solidarity. Here learning is about relational and normative abilities that do not concern 'objective' truth but rightness: which norms are accepted by or valid for and in which groups?

This intersubjective level is as real as the objective one. Some theorists tend to get stuck in an absolute-relative dualism, linked to an object-subject polarity, because they do not perceive that what is inter-subjectively produced can exist and be valid even though it is unstable and not fixed. In fact, neither is the objective: 'all that is solid melts into air',

not least in late modernity.³ There is a futile longing for an eternal and absolute grounding of values that easily leads to bottomless disappointment in the process of modernization, where all fixed truths are dissolved or at least put into motion. But intersubjectivity is not the same as arbitrariness. Norms are never absolutely valid, but neither are they illusionary chimeras. They exist in the social world as inter-subjectively shared and flexible rules for social behaviour, rules people play with and transform in their real interactions.

Norms and relations also change continuously and sometimes in revolutionary leaps. Popular music is affected by and participates in the process of evolving ethical values and ideologies, and relational structures of solidarity and sociality. Pop song lyrics, forms of music making and aesthetic value systems all reflect changes in the collective norms and inter-personal relations of a society (see Denisoff and Peterson 1972; Björnberg 1987). In late modernity norms and group relations are becoming more open and less bound by fixed traditions. This is both for better and for worse: it gives space for living differently and escaping oppressive traditions, but it also lessens security and enforces individual decisions and hard identity work. In our period, this *releasing* process is accelerating and spreading into most people's everyday life. The result is a continuous *differentiation* of norms and subgroups and their partial loosening from socio-economic factors.

The Swedish music movement of the seventies was a transitory case in this process. It built up solidarities and norms that broke with earlier traditions but it tried to reconstruct a rather rigid normative and relational universe. Today the scene is much more fluid. Among the three bands in our research project it was interesting that each group, coming from different parts of the country and very different social strata, for some periods of their lives liked similar types of music (punk and heavy metal), oriented themselves towards similar social norms of interaction, and regarded inter-personal relations as something to talk about and construct rather than as things given or natural.

Resistance here is developed through *counter-values* in *counter-groups*, through collective experimentation with non-traditional norms, and new ways of interacting in

modern multi-cultural society. Repressive norms and relations in society, in the dimensions of gender, class and ethnicity, are opposed and restructured in social groups trying out more democratic modes of sociality. Moral critiques of dominant ethics, and utopian germs of a richer justice, exist in the cross-cultural solidarity of hip-hop peer groups and on dance floors, where contacts are made over traditional social borders. Without such social levels of resistance counter movements would be empty shells.

Music and the subjective world

On an *internal* level music relates to a range of *subjective* forces within the individual. Identities and psychic need structures are formed by socialization, in learning processes of different kinds, and they are unique to each person.

The microphysics of cultural change and resistance on this psychological level of popular music use was the main focus of our rock research project (Fornäs *et al.* 1988). Pop music is the media form that dominates the everyday life of Swedish teenagers; it is their greatest leisure interest and activity, being very evenly spread across genders and social classes (Roe 1985; Czaplicka 1987; von Feilitzen *et al.* 1989). It is estimated that of Sweden's 8.5 million inhabitants more than 100,000 play in rock groups, constituting a rather big popular 'movement' consisting mainly of men between thirteen and thirty years of age. A reasonable estimate is that about six per cent of Swedish teenagers play in rock bands and that about fifteen per cent of them are female (see Trondman 1989).

Why is rock and pop music so important, and how is it used? Quantitative methods alone cannot satisfactorily answer these questions. We found it necessary to make a close qualitative study, where rock music use was found to have meanings and functions, sources and processes, on three different levels.

Rock music use responds to demands and uses resources from the objective, social and subjective world, leading to *learning processes* in these dimensions. Cognitive, administrative, practical, relational and normative processes are all important for the production of subjective identities, but this production is itself situated in the subjective dimension of reflexive, expressive and ideal-forming learning. Through music use it is

possible to reflect on one's own identity, learn how to express one's feelings and develop personal ideals. One of the boys in our bands expressed this thus:

'A boy mustn't cry in Sweden, everyone knows that, that's the way it is... The only way to get this out then, is standing on a stage, to sing it out. 'Cause then they [the feelings of sorrow] disappear; I can convey to others what I feel, 'cause if you keep it inside it only grows and grows.' (Fornäs *et al.* 1988, p. 255)

By collectively experimenting with the symbolic language of music, this boy noticed that he had a lot of sorrow inside (reflexivity) and acquired a tool for getting it out (expressivity), and he also changed his own self ideal (ideal-forming).

The relation of music and other symbolic forms to this inner world is not one of truth or rightness, but of truthfulness, sincerity and authenticity. Authenticity here is not naturalness or primordality - a common rock ideology justly attacked by (post) modern culture critiques (see Frith 1986) - but has to do with a 'correspondence' between sign and subject, between cultural expression and psychic structure, in other words, that you somehow mean what you say.

Peer group learning processes differ from those of dominant institutions like the school by giving more weight to non-verbal communicative sign structures like music and visuality, to the shaping of collective norms and to expressivity, by being voluntary and self-chosen, by lacking permanent teachers and by being open, that is, without predetermined goals. They therefore can be seen as a reaction to limits and problems in system oriented socialization arenas. Goal oriented rationality in school makes communication and meaning production problematic, consequently teenagers search for other spheres, such as peer groups and popular music activities, where such needs can be met (see Roe 1985). These spheres are better equipped than the school (stuck as it is in the rigidity and stiffness of its institutional forms) to meet and handle the unpredictable challenges of late modern changes. Heavy metal and hard rock contain many examples,

such as Twisted Sister's 'Be Cruel to Your School' (from their album *Come Out and Play* of 1985):

'... Didn't somebody tell me this would be so great
 be the best thing I ever had?
 How come they never told me 'bout the word "exaggerate"
 how'd somethin' so good get so bad?
 'Cause hey, I gotta know: Am I slow?
 Where do I go from here?
 Do ABC's and 123's
 mean that much to me, that much to me, me, me, me, me?
 Be cruel to your school 'cause you may never get another
 Be cruel to your school in the name of rock and roll
 Be cruel to your school just like a sister or a brother
 Be cruel to your school in the name of rock and roll
 I see them walkin' round like the livin' dead
 Ain't they got nothin' between their ears?
 How come they don't seem to hear a single word I say?
 They ain't the only ones who're bored to tears
 Now there must be a better way to educate
 'cause this way ain't workin' like it should
 Can't they just invent a pill or frozen concentrate
 that makes you smarter and taste, mmm, so good ...'

Subjective processes are not eternal, stable or biologically given. Just as societal objectivations and social norms are the result of concrete creative processes of identity work in a socio-cultural context, 'inner nature' is a historical construct produced in socialization processes. Subjectivity is not absolutely given, but nor is it an unreal or dead illusion. In late modernity this differentiated structure of learning processes evolves and

transforms. There is a heightened attention to inter-subjective relations and subjective needs, to normative, relational, reflexive and expressive learning, as traditional forms stressing practical skills and cognitive content vanish. This process accompanies the whole modern era, at least from the start of industrialization, but has been intensified and universalized in late modernity. It adds weight to music and other symbolic forms and makes the aesthetic more central to everyday life forms than it was in periods when identities for most people were more often and on more levels felt as given by stable objectivized traditions.

An increasing importance of '*narcissist*' forms of experience is one aspect of recent developments in popular musical forms (see Ziehe 1975; Ziehe and Stubenrauch 1982; Larsen 1989). Late modern popular music satisfies new needs for strong emotive experiences through the volume, beat and sound of the music - parameters that for listeners and musicians facilitate a dissolution of rigid ego-boundaries and a 'regression' to pre-verbal, '*narcissist*' forms of experience, feelings of life and completeness in one's own body. Collective listening and playing also meet needs for mirroring oneself and enlarging one's self-esteem through the merging into or response of an audience. The listener can magnify his or her identity by being part of an affirmative peer group or even a many-headed disco or concert audience, while the musician does the same through the teamwork of the band and by audience responses. Finally, in recent musical and audio-visual forms like music television (post-) modernist aesthetic techniques correspond to new reception modes dissolving traditional narrative forms into fluctuating intensities of feeling, closer to the dream process than to traditional ego-oriented aesthetics. All this responds to heightened late modern needs for self-mirroring and *self-expansion* caused by changes in socialization and in the everyday life world.

Subjective learning processes potentially lead to *resistance* in the form of *counter-identities* - an emancipatory hope for, and will to, personal autonomy and authenticity. Socialization is not a totalitarian forming of passive subjects into pre-determined identities but a serious play where different external forces clash and meet accumulated internal need structures. The subjective micro-processes of creative music use and

production contain contradictions and openings essential for the development of large-scale movements and revolutionary social changes.

Music as a cultural form

Music in itself is a cultural form. Through styles and genres, forms and signs, it offers a symbolic system which can be used for communicative interaction. As a language music relates to all three other levels, using and being about objective reality, concerning social norms and relations, and producing and expressing subjectivity. All discussions of popular music belong to this cultural level, but whereas the former three sections treated that in music which relates to the objective, social and subjective levels, here the focus is on music itself, its signs and symbols as such, and how they point to themselves or inter-textually to other systems of meaning.

Pure aesthetic or stylistic analysis points out sources of pop within the cultural sphere itself: how symbols and styles relate to each other, who influenced whom, what inter-textualities exist in and between different musical works. Learning processes also take place within this dimension - in fact all the learning discussed has to pass through the learning of music as a language symbol system. By listening to or playing rock or pop, people learn how to use symbolic forms (of music, words, gestures and images) that are valid for self and others. Cultural learning is also social; it has to be anchored in each individual as well as in a collective. Like norms and relations musical languages (styles etc) have to be valid for those who play and those who listen. The cultural level demands an inter-subjectively shared interpretation of meaning and can thus be seen as a part of the social level. It is the shared, social dimension turned to itself: the means of inter-subjective communication judged not by what is expressed but how it is expressed, according to the criteria of aesthetic well-formedness and comprehensibility.

Sometimes symbolic communication in music (as with words) can form propositional discourses, consciously using the other three levels at the same time. The music movement momentarily explored such discursive use of music, making political statements and containing information on problems in the external world. But in art forms

like music (or poetic language) the denotative aspects related to truth and falseness and to the objective world are usually less important than this since art (including popular music) has its main purpose not in the production of true knowledge (like science) but in exploring the (limits of) symbolic structures themselves in relation to the social and subjective levels. As a rule questions of normative rightness, subjective truthfulness, and aesthetic comprehensibility or well-formedness are of greater interest than the truth of a pop song.

In fact, in many cultural forms, rightness and truthfulness are also of secondary importance. Many pop artists experiment with aesthetic expressions where normativity and authenticity hardly seem to count at all, and the aesthetic value need not be dependent on the other levels. To Bruce Springsteen's fans, authenticity seems to be a core value (and is interpreted according to an ideology of originality and naturalness, see Connor 1987), while to the audience of the Pet Shop Boys or the J A Ms it might not be. It is however not irrelevant, since even the play with artifice and superficial roles can be judged as more or less ethical or honest on a higher level. A musical text that is explicitly constructed as pastiche, parody or irony is decoded and interpreted differently by its listeners, and its normativity or authenticity does not demand a unity between the actual norms or moods of the artist and those of the mocked characters in a song. The relevant relation is between the implicit author of the song (the position experienced as the source of the irony etc) and its real producers. A song that is felt by a group of listeners to imply unrighteous values or to be false to the positions of its creators will thus be judged by them as immoral or inauthentic. If they can argue for such a conclusion, others will have to agree. Whether its aesthetic quality is touched by such a verdict remains an open question for further discussion.

In his discussion of Abba's 1975 superhit 'Fernando', Tagg (1981) illustrates these criteria. Translating his arguments into Habermasian terms, we can say that he finds the song culturally well-formed and perhaps also subjectively sincere (that is, it is probably not a conscious deceit), but normatively unrighteous and perhaps also objectively false to reality. In other cases, other combinations occur. It should be remembered that all such

judgements are themselves social and cultural, which means they are inter-subjectively rather than firmly objectively or purely subjectively valid. Whether a symbolic expression is true, righteous, authentic and/or aesthetically well-formed can only be decided in a collective dialogue or interaction. But whereas truth and authenticity relate expressions to the external and the internal world respectively, social and cultural judgements concern relations within the inter-subjective level itself.

The cultural level changes historically, being partly dependent on the other levels, and partly autonomous. The social releasing process already mentioned has an equally important cultural parallel: a cultural release, *openness* and *flexibility* showing up as much in popular culture as in avantgarde fine arts (see Ziehe and Stubenrauch 1982; Reimer 1989). Pop taste is partially loosened from traditional determinations and becomes something one can shape and be responsible for oneself; there are always innumerable alternatives in sight. Cultural modernization in our late modern period has thereby also led to an intense focusing upon symbolic structures: a sort of linguistic turn not only in theory but also in everyday life. We witness a growing *reflexivity* and the media offer more and more heterogeneous images in which to reflect our more and more focused and problematized individual and collective identities. Post-modernist theory and deconstruction strategies can themselves be analyzed as expressions of this tendency. Popular music increasingly refers to itself, in nostalgic trends or shameless borrowings of heterogeneous montages. A typical example is hip-hop, where different historical styles of music are cut together to produce self-conscious mirrors of the identities of musicians and fans - listen for example to LL Cool J's bricolage of Bill Haley, Chuck Berry and Jimi Hendrix in 'Go Cut Creator Go' (from the album *Bigger and Deffer*, 1987)!

Illustration: LP cover to Schoolly D: *Am I Black Enough For You?* Cool hip-hop prize-fighters superimposed on the 'African' colours of red, black and green pose a question of identity in a style full of montage, bricolage and reflexivity.

The music movement of the seventies heralded such reflexivity through its plurality of genres and its many debates on cultural policy and choice of musical styles. Its tiresome arguments on the progressiveness or commercialism of rock nevertheless showed how a traditionalist and naturalist innocence in the choice of musical forms had withered away once and for all. Musical genres were now handled and experienced as a store from which to choose. One's own music was heard more as a product of such creative choices than as an un-reflected heritage masked as something natural. Now people perhaps focus less on 'right' and 'wrong' in musical tastes, but they generally accept that musical expressions are social and historical constructs and they consciously use a manifold of symbolic forms to test their own identities. This was well illustrated by the three bands in our study, who documented and reflected upon their own history, discussed what musical genre and visual style to choose and develop, and had plenty of concepts for describing themselves as well as other youth groups and styles (the interviews with one of the bands contained the names of 170 artists, 90 musical genres and 160 words for musical judgements).

The cultural level is also a site of contradictions and struggles, and resistance to the dominant symbolic order takes the form of counter languages and *counter-culture* - that is, forming critical meanings, playing with the limits of ordinary (musical) language, and striving for more intense symbolic forms.

New moves

Pop and rock are always, but never only, about idols and business; they also concern the amateur basis of young bands and the vast and secretive audience. Popular music contains crucial ambivalences that need a non-reductionist cultural critique to be understood. I propose a multi-dimensional model for understanding sources, processes, changes and resistance in popular music. Note that there are many interrelationships, horizontal as well as diagonal; objective sources might, for example, lead to social learning processes that can contribute to subjective changes and cultural forms of resistance.

LEVELS	SOURCES	LEARNING PROCESSES			CHANGES	RESISTANCE
Objective	Materials&institutions	Cognitive	Administrative	Practical	Rationalization	Counterpowers
Social	Groups&norms	-	Relational	Normative	Release	Countervalues
Subjective	Psychic structures	Reflexive	Expressive	Idealforming	Narcissism	Counteridentities
Cultural	Symbols&styles	Symbolic	-	-	Reflexivity	Countercultures

I have mentioned *objective, social, subjective and cultural sources* of musical change and it is important not to lose sight of any of them. I have sketched out *learning processes* in music as an inter-subjective communication form in the same dimensions. Objectively, music users learn cognitive, administrative and practical skills which are of use in the transmission of sounds from senders to receivers, or in the use of musical taste and style to show one's real or desired position in relation to the external surroundings. Socially, music shapes inter-personal relations and norms, for instance, among dancers in a disco. Subjectively, music helps individuals to communicate with hidden levels of their own inner subjectivity, through reflexivity, expressivity and ideal-forming. Culturally, music users learn to understand and play with symbolic systems of meaning. Such are the different dimensions of musical use value.

I have also hinted at revolutionary *changes* in late modernity on each level. Objectively, through capitalist rationalization, systemic demands clash with communicative ones as pop, from its beginnings, is colonized by market and state interests. Socially, a release from traditions and norms opens up new possibilities and differentiated groupings. Subjectively, narcissist need structures become more important in everyday aesthetic practice. Culturally, we find a growing openness, flexibility and reflexivity possible and necessary in our late modern world.

Finally, there is also *resistance* on all four levels: counter powers and institutions resisting systemic pressures and forming alternative objective structures; counter groups and norms criticizing established morals and experimenting with new relations and juster ethics; counter identities striving for autonomy and authenticity; and counter cultures developing critiques of dominant ideologies while playing with new communicative forms. Such resistance starts from potentials in the learning processes of each level.

Practical learning is excellent for building fortresses, normative learning for developing new relations, expressive learning for forming other identities, and aesthetic learning for playing with revolutionary symbolic forms. The changes on each level also provoke new forms of resistance on that level. Increasing rationalization, cultural release, narcissist need structures and reflexivity induce oppositions to old institutions, norms, personality forms and symbolic structures and lead to experiments with alternative ones. But, as already noted, even though inter-relations are strongest within each level, they also cross between them; for example, the colonization of the life world by the systems can lead to aesthetic responses such as working class pupils developing subcultural styles as a reaction to the stratification in school demanded by the market and the state (see Roe 1985).

Against monolithic reductionism in cultural theory, then, I argue for open and complex theoretical work, using the increasing potentials for cultural reflexivity and release from traditional norms. Inquiring and undogmatic dialogues between theoretical perspectives can contribute to a richer understanding of popular music and youth culture in our time. In popular music a variety of different counter-experiments is necessary for exploring the possibilities of late modernity and attacking its threats. There simply is no *single* way to do it.

¹ These concepts are inspired by Habermas, though his understanding of language and communication is too limited. I prefer a wider definition, not privileging verbal discursive propositions but including all inter-subjective symbol games, such as poetic language, music, visual images and bodily gestures.

² Adorno and Horkheimer, Haug and Baudrillard all share a common misreading of Marx's commodity analysis. In capitalism, the commodity form produces a problematic split into exchange value and use value, and capitalist modernization entails the risk that exchange value logic will dominate and disturb use value processes, as part of a threatening colonization of the life world by the market and state systems. However, the dominance of exchange value in profit oriented commercialism does not lead to any disappearance of use value - that would make the commodity form disappear altogether. And use values are not confined to material needs but include the use of symbolic forms for the construction of meaning and communication. What Haug (1971) calls commodity aesthetics is a use value as real as any, since aesthetic use is as real as material use; and only Baudrillard's (1988) vulgar materialist view of use values can lead him to conceptualize symbolic functions as hyperreal simulations. Behind the cultural pessimism of deterioration prophecies lies a naive view of use value as something purely material

and bodily. Social anthropologists and historians can teach us how deeply human praxis has always been anchored in the symbolic.

³ The quotation from the Marx and Engels *Communist Manifesto* has been popularized by Berman 1982.

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Abstract

Popular music in late modernity contains crucial ambivalences that ask for a non-reductionist cultural critique. To that end, a multi-dimensional model is suggested for understanding sources, learning processes, recent changes, and resistance forms in pop and youth culture. On an objective level, a growing systemic rationality of technology, politics and economy induces counter-powers and counter-institutions. On a social level, a gradual release from traditional norms and relations inspire experiments with counter-values and counter-groups. On a subjective level new narcissist personal traits develop, leading to counter-identities. On a cultural level a growing reflexivity make counter-cultures try out open and flexible forms of symbolic interaction and music making.