THEORY DEVELOPMENT IS A JAZZ SOLO: BIRD LIVES

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ABSTRACT

Come reminisce with me and think about the Bird. Remember everything he did and all the things you heard.

—Eddie Jefferson, lyrics to Charlie Parker's "Now's the Time"

Everybody knows, The more you hesitate, the more you lose. If you be still and fail to move, You're gonna dig yourself a well-intentioned rut And think you've found a groove. Waitin' for your time to come, You might not ever move.

—Jon Hendricks, lyrics to Charlie Parker's "Now's the Time"

INTRODUCTION

I do not claim to have developed any theory myself. At most, I might have generated a couple of hypotheses and formulated a couple of concepts in my time, but certainly nothing so grand as a theory. Indeed, I claim no knowledge of how to create anything, whether it be theory or something more mundane. Rather, I see the creative process as an almost mystical endeavor involving a large component of luck. I believe that to presume one knows how to create might impose a jinx from which one might never recover. Here, I recall a lecture I once gave to some marketing PhD students on "How to Write a Paper." On the way back to my office, I stopped at my mailbox and found two rejection letters from journal editors. The principle of irony that governs such phenomena suggests that any claim to understand creativity would inevitably result in my never creating anything again for as long as I lived.

As chairman of this session, Rich Lutz asked me to talk about theory development in consumer esthetics and to relate that topic to Bill McGuire's famous paper on "The Yin and Yang of Progress in Social Psychology." Fortunately, Rich has followed his own advice and has himself lucidly discussed the implications of McGuire's seven laws for the development of theory in consumer behavior. In my own comments, I intend to follow the first rule of creativity, to depart from structure, to violate the order that Rich tried to impose on my thoughts, and to seek a slightly different organization.

Claimer

After all these disclaimers, I feel I owe you some "claim—er" to justify my presence on the program. In brief, I propose to focus on esthetics as it applies to the development of marketing theory in general and consumer-behavior theory in particular. Specifically, I propose that successful theory development parallels the process of artistic creativity so that, in this sense, scientific and esthetic concerns begin to merge.

One test of greatness in art is the great esthetic value it tends to endure. If one defines "durability" as the length of time over which a product yields its value-contributing services, one must recognize artworks like the Sistine Chapel ceiling or the Mass in B-Minor as the ultimate consumer durables. Lesser consumer durables such as automobiles and refrigerators might yield valued consummation experiences for ten or twenty years. But people still appreciate the work of Michelangelo and Bach hundreds of years after its original production.

Similarly, one test of greatness in theory development is whether the theory lasts. Like art, great theory endures for generations. Like a great artistic masterpiece, a great theoretical contribution is copied, borrowed from, reformulated, built upon, and extended.

In this presentation, I shall examine an illustration of greatness in artistic creativity and an instance of greatness in the development of consumer-behavior theory. From these examples, I shall abstract a general view of the creative process in both art and science. I shall show how this framework fits the case of jazz improvisation as well as the activities of consumer-behavior theorists and shall argue that it suggests means of facilitating the creative process in both.

GREATNESS IN ARTISTIC CREATIVITY

As an example of greatness in artistic creativity, I have selected the work of Charlie Parker, the legendary jazz saxophonist who was sometimes called "Bird" or "Harlebird" (presumably, because he liked to eat chicken) and who died in 1955 (at the tragically young age of only 35 years old). On innumerable occasions, Bird carried his alto sax into a recording studio or concert hall and improvised—that is, invented spontaneously on the spot—masterpieces of musical innovativeness that are still listened to, admired, studied, and loved 30 or 40 years after their original extemporaneous creation. More importantly, Bird's impromptu conceptions have inspired subsequent generations of jazz musicians who have borrowed from and extended his improvisatory genius.

One illustration involves a tune called "Now's the Time" that Parker first recorded in 1945. This simple melody on the conventional 12-bar blues pattern later became a popular hit when some Rhythm & Blues musicians retitled it "The Hucklebuck." In his own version, Bird played a three-chorus solo that we still greet with admiring wonder 40 years after he first walked (or, more likely, stumbled) into a recording studio and conjured it up with typically pure spontaneity. (Other performances of the same tune on the same date establish that Parker did not even come close to repeating himself.)

In about 1957, Hal McKusick recorded an arrangement by Ernie Wilkins of Bird's "Now's the Time" solo orchestrated for a full sax section. A couple of years later, Lambert, Hendricks, & Ross performed the piece with lyrics composed...
by Jon Hendricks to match Parker's solo note-for-note. In 1968, Eddie Jefferson added his version, with completely new lyrics set to the same solo.

Of course, Parker himself continued to develop his ideas on the blues. In the early 1950's, he re-recorded "Now's the Time." His new solo extended his earlier ideas in a performance at a much faster tempo and has itself served as the basis for subsequent elaboration. Thus, in 1977 (32 years after the original recording of "Now's the Time"), Wayne Marsh took Bird's second solo and arranged it for a group of Los Angeles jazz musicians called Supersax.

In sum, the impromptu ideas reflected in a great jazz solo have been borrowed, modified, and extended over a period of 40 years. That constitutes greatness in music.

GREATNESS IN MARKETING THEORY

From many possible examples of greatness in developing marketing theory, I shall pick the work of John Howard—partly because I am familiar with (and enormously indebted to) his oeuvre and partly because it so admirably illustrates the kind of creative evolution that we have just examined in the case of Charlie Parker. Just as Bird took the basic blues form and elaborated it into the jazz solo on "Now's the Time," John Howard adopted and adapted an old paradigm whose use extends all the way back to Plato: Cognitions ——> Affect ——> Behavior. This framework appeared in Howard's 1963 text on marketing management, where he traced the flow of effects from "information seeking" to "predisposition" to "purchase."

Just as more recent musicians continue to take ideas invented by Charlie Parker and borrow, modify, and develop them, many consumer-behavior theorists (myself included) continue to play minor variations on essentially the same C-A-B theme that John Howard introduced 20 years ago. There are two Howard and Seth developed an enormously influential extension in their 1969 theory of buyer behavior by focusing on the linkages from "brand comprehension" to "attitude" to "intention." Howard retained this terminology in his 1974 reformation, which was tested by Farley and King's ground-breaking representation of the model as a system of simultaneous equations. Others have provided empirically testable structural models on the same C-A-B theme, as in recent attempts by Holbrook, Mitchell and Olson, Shimp, MacKenzie and Lutz, and Batra and Ray to add meaningfulness to the model by incorporating the mediating effects of attitude-toward-the-ad. Indeed, Holbrook appears to be helplessly trapped within the C-A-B paradigm. His recent work with Beth Hirschman on the consumption experience retains the familiar structure using "cognition, affect, and behavior" renamed as "fantasies, feelings, and fun." Meanwhile, John Howard has continued to tinker with his model, reducing it to the streamlined version that just appeared in the Journal of Marketing and that included only "information/identification," "attitude/confidence," and "intention/purchase."

THE CREATIVE PROCESS

Do the parallels that I have suggested between the work of Charlie Parker and John Howard stem from common characteristics shared by these two men? Probably not. As the following personality profiles suggest, one would find it difficult to imagine two more different people.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parker</th>
<th>Howard</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reckless</td>
<td>Careful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disorderly</td>
<td>Orderly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emotional</td>
<td>Intellectual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manic Depressive</td>
<td>Well-Adjusted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overweight</td>
<td>Thin</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Addicted to drugs</td>
<td>Abstemious</td>
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Apparently, the shared greatness of Bird's music and Howard's theory lies not in any similarity between the two personalities involved but rather in a resemblance between the processes underlying their creativity. I believe that, in essence, both processes involve a dialectic in which a thesis gives way to an antithesis and in which the thesis and antithesis ultimately combine to form a synthesis that then serves as a new thesis on which to base subsequent rounds of progress. More specifically, creativity in both music and theory development appears to involve a process that looks like this:

STRUCTURE ——> DEPARTURE ——> RECONCILIATION

I shall discuss this creative process as it pertains both to the jazz solo and to the development of marketing theory.

THE JAZZ SOLO

In a jazz solo, structure consists of such organizational elements as the basic melody and harmonic progression of a piece. The jazz musician begins with these structural elements and introduces departures in the form of melodic variations and harmonic extensions. The all-important reconciliation occurs when these violations of organization and deviations from order are made to work via a reinterpretation of the piece within which they fit meaningfully. When jazz listeners experience such a reconciliation, they say that the performance "swings." It "cooks." The musician is "takin' care of business."

Facilitating this process of artistic creativity can stem from any factor that strengthens the achievement of structure, departure, or reconciliation. I shall mention each briefly.

Facilitating Structure: "Woodshedding"

Jazz musicians have coined a term for the facilitation of structure. They call it "woodshedding." Here, they refer to the arduous hours of practice and preparation by which artists master their instruments and build a complete knowledge of the jazz repertoire. From countless hours of playing scales and studying the chord changes to standard tunes, a jazz player builds his "chops" and acquires the technique needed to blow his "horn."
A famous story recounts the episode in which a young, inexperienced Charlie Parker sat in with some of the other musicians in Kansas City, many of them from the Kansas City band. As the story goes, Charlie played so badly that the celebrated drummer Jo Jones used one of his ride cymbals like a frisbee and threw it straight at Bird's head. After narrowly escaping decapitation, Bird felt so humiliated that he withdrew to the wilderness and practiced morning, noon, and night until he had completely mastered every aspect of his horn. He then returned to Kansas City and outshone everybody in town. That's woodshedding.

Facilitating Departure: "Playing"

Notice that we speak of "playing" music. This linguistic habit carries significance because, as pointed out by Schiller and Freud and many others, the essence of artistic creativity lies very close to the intrinsically motivated phenomena that we call "play." It involves ludic or autotelic involvement with creative activity for its own sake. For example, consider the opposite words of Johnny Griffin, a prominent jazz saxophonist:

I go on that bandstand to have fun.... music is magic, man.... I've got this metal thing in my hands, but when I play it, it becomes part of my body.... All I want to do is blow, man. I want to blow my horn and have a nice public and a swingin' rhythm section and that's heaven for me.

That's it, you understand. The rest is dross.

This sense of intrinsically motivated play seems to spur the jazz musician to venture past the conventional bounds of his art form. Charlie Parker's notorious drug habits may have contributed to his musical liberation.

But, equally likely, his ability to deviate from the standard or normal arose from his unfettered sense of humor and pursuit of fun. One finds enormous comedy and wit in Bird's playing. Indeed, Charlie Parker ultimately laughed himself to death.

Bird had grown seriously ill. Suffering from ulcers and cirrhosis of the liver, he went to recuperate at the home of his wealthy patron, the Baroness Pannonica de Koenigswarter, who occupied an apartment at the Stanhope Hotel on Fifth Avenue in New York. After some bed rest, he recovered enough to permit him to sit up and watch a little television. He became uproariously amused at a comedy sketch on an old vaudeville show that he saw. He began laughing so hard that he ruptured something deep inside. His laughter turned into a choking noise, and he died before anyone could do anything to save him. So Bird literally died laughing, an ironic tribute to his heroic sense of humor.

Facilitating Reconciliation: "Swinging"

When the musical dialectic of structure and departure, order and violation, organization and deviation comes together and works as an effectively integrated whole, we say that the performance "swings." Unfortunately, no one can say where swinging comes from, what makes it work, or how to do it. A helpless lady once asked Fats Waller to define this quality. The great jazz pianist replied, "Lady, if you have to ask, you'll never know."

John Abercrombie, a contemporary jazz guitarist, comes as close as anyone to articulating the complex process by which a jazz musician reconciles elements of structure and departure into a well-integrated solo:

If I find myself playing a long, very even type of phrase, I'll suddenly realize that if I continue on this manner, it's going to get very boring. So I'll play a more broken phrase, or a phrase involving more triplets, anything to break up the monotony of what I've just played.

What you play is the impetus for what comes next, and it all has to be with the general flow of your solo.

No one doubts that Charlie Parker knew how to swing. From the elements of structure and departure, Bird constructed an integrated style so personal and powerful that it would have remained instantly recognizable as unique had not so many subsequent musicians slavishly imitated every nuance and turn of phrase.

THEORY DEVELOPMENT

Like artistic creativity, theory development also involves a process of structure, departure, and reconciliation. Structure stems from a discipline's habits of thought, from its conventional wisdom, from its overarching paradigm. Departure comes in the form of new insights, divergent thinking, and the violation of hidden assumptions. Finally, both structure and departure achieve reconciliation in some combination, integration, or synthesis that, in turn, serves as the new structure upon which to base subsequent rounds of theory development. For example, building on work sponsored by the Ford Foundation in the early 1960s, the integrative theory proposed by Howard and Sheth in 1969 provided a new synthesis of many previously divergent streams of thought and thereby constituted the basis for subsequent rounds of theoretical departure.

The question of how to facilitate the creative process arises again with respect to theory development. Again, I shall consider ways of facilitating structure, departure, and reconciliation.

Facilitating Structure

Marketing and consumer-behavior theorists customarily rely on several familiar aids to facilitate their understanding of structure in a particular problem area. We immerse ourselves in the problem. We visit the library. We peruse the literature. We talk with colleagues. We attend conferences, preferably in Florida during the winter months.

All these activities help to put us in touch with the conventional wisdom. In the sense discussed at this conference by Christine Moorman, they shape the "prepared mind."

Facilitating Departure

To facilitate departures from the conventional wisdom, one might resort to various extreme measures such as taking drugs or sleeping a lot in hopes of having interesting dreams. We hear this approach touted implicitly by those who celebrate Coleridge and his "Kubla Khan" or Kekulé and his benzene rings. But, ultimately, such methods may result in self-destruction or self-defeat, as we have already seen in the case of Charlie Parker's ruinous narcotics addition. We would prefer a safer route to glory in theory development.

Rich Lutz has mentioned several potential aids to departure inspired by Bill McGoya's seven soma. I shall not repeat or review his valuable suggestions here.

Rather, I shall contend that, just as in the case of jazz improvisation, the essence of finding new departures in theory development often lies in play. By "play," I refer to the mental habit of pursuing thoughts for their own sake, having fun with ideas, deriving joy from the activity of free thinking, letting concepts take on a life of their own, inventing one's intellectual products with no much energy that they practically jump up and dance around the room.
A similar emphasis on play emerges in Roger Von Oech's recent book called A Whack on the Side of the Head. But I think the importance of deriving fun from one's intellectual pursuits received its most glowing expression in the work of Edward Tolman as he looked back over a distinguished career in psychology:

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I have liked to think about psychology in ways that have proved congenial to me.... The best that any individual scientist...can do seems to be to follow his own gleam and his own bent, however inadequate they may be. In fact, I suppose that actually this is what we all do. In the end, the only sure criterion is to have fun. And I have had fun.
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To paraphrase, the only sure criterion is to do the very thing that makes most of us feel guilty—namely, to pursue the most enjoyable parts of our work and, if possible, to find ways to make these even more rewarding, while neglecting the parts that we find odious and tedious. Though most of us cannot escape our share of dreary committee meetings and thankless administrative assignments, we must view these intrusions as constraints and press toward maximizing the joy derived from the intellectual task that remains after satisfying our more mundane job requirements. Few academics receive enough pay to compensate them adequately for the hours spent on their daily responsibilities. For many of us, only the intrinsic rewards from the pleasure gained in the development and testing of theory can justify the devotion of one's life to scholarly pursuits. For the lucky few, even independent wealth would not dispel the desire to invent conceptually.

Here, I recall the inspirational words of Muriel Costa-Greenspon, an opera singer who recently won 1.7 million dollars in the lottery. When questioned by reporters, she admitted that her financial windfall was "really something... But she added:

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To tell the truth, nothing can compare to the thrill of going on stage and singing, of giving something special to an audience. That is pay that goes beyond any money, and it's my greatest joy.
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Facilitating Reconciliation

Again, as in the case of artistic creativity, no one really knows how to foster the reconciliation that integrates structure and departure so as to promote hypothesis generation and theory construction. This reconciliation involves phenomena that Arthur Koestler calls "bisociation," the Gestalt psychologists call "insight," and many call the "Eureka experience" or "light bulb in the head." At the moment, we are calling it "theory development."

I cannot say how to make a reconciliation happen in general, but I can report that, for me, one helpful aid often relies on what I would call "matrix thinking" and what Rich Lutz called the "morphological approach." This way of looking at problems employs logical division or typologies based on dichotomies to clarify conceptual issues.

Kenneth Boulding once pointed out that there are two kinds of people in the world: those who divide everything into two groups and those who don't. Apparently, like Boulding, I belong to the former group. At any rate, I find that, sometimes, by thinking in matrices, one can reach new discoveries that might otherwise have escaped attention. Some examples follow.

**The Fourth Monkey.** We have all heard of the famous monkeys Hear-No-Evil, See-No-Evil, and Speak-No-Evil. But suppose that we classify these monkeys systematically according to their focus (inputs/outputs) and response mode (verbal/visual). We thereby obtain the following typology of morally concerned simians:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbal</th>
<th>Visual</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inputs</td>
<td>Hear-No-Evil</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Outputs</td>
<td>Speak-No-Evil</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This matrix indicates that, all along, we have unjustly neglected an important fourth type of monkey—one concerned with avoiding nasty visual outputs. I picture this monkey wearing a trench coat with his collar turned up and a hat pulled down over his eyes. His name is Show-No-Evil.

**Types and Degrees of Market Segmentation.** Kotler distinguishes among "undifferentiated marketing," "concentrated marketing," and "differentiated marketing." We may represent the key underlying distinctions by dichotomizing the firm's view of the market (homogeneous/segmented) and the number of offerings it produces (one or a few offerings/many offerings):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>One or Few Offerings</th>
<th>Many Offerings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homogeneous Market</td>
<td>Undifferentiated Marketing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Segmented Market</td>
<td>Concentrated Marketing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This classification suggests that Kotler has neglected a fourth type of strategy in which the firm produces many offerings for a market that it views as homogeneous. We might call this strategy "proliferational marketing."

**Classification of Goods.** Melvin Copeland's famous classification of "convenience," "shopping," and "specialty" goods falls into a matrix that distinguishes between degrees of physical shopping effort (low/high) and the timing of mental effort (during/prior to the shopping trip):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mental Effort</th>
<th>Physical Effort</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>During Shopping</td>
<td>Low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior to Shopping</td>
<td>High</td>
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</table>

Holbrook and Howard have suggested that this matrix reveals a fourth type of good, not very important in Copeland's day but increasingly conspicuous in more recent marketing history—namely, goods on which the consumer expends little physical shopping effort, but concerning which she has formed some brand loyalty due to mental effort prior to the shopping trip. We call this neglected fourth type of buying situation "preference goods."

**Materialism.** Russ Belk (the next speaker on the program) has formulated an interesting conceptualization of materialism. We may recast his formulation to distinguish among "possessiveness," "(non)generosity," and "(early)" on the basis of who owns the product(s) (self/other) and the focus of the resulting materialistic sentiments (having/sharing):
Having     Sharing

Self     Possessiveness     (Non)generosity
Others     Envy     ?????????

This matrix suggests that Belk has neglected a potentially important fourth type of materialism directed at the sharing of other people's possessions. We might call this cell of the typology "Borrowing." We suspect that interesting insights await the investigation of the free-loading personality.

CONCLUSION

I have argued that theory development is for the philosophy of science what artistic creativity is for the study of aesthetics. I have suggested that artistic creativity and theory development follow similar processes and that the same logic applies to the facilitation of both.

I can envision two possible responses to these arguments. The first is "So what?" To quote Ben Shahn, "Aesthetics is for the artist like ornithology is for the birds." But, speaking of birds, a second and more meaningful response is to remember the legend of Charlie Parker and to preserve the ideal of greatness in theory development.

The legend of Charlie Parker recalls stories sometimes told about the death of Beethoven. When Bird died, the Baroness was holding his wrist and taking his pulse. At the moment when his pulse stopped and Charlie Parker passed away, she heard a tremendous clap of thunder. Within hours all around New York City, soon all across the country, and before long all over the world, signs began to appear on sidewalks, on the walls of abandoned buildings, in subway stations, and in nightclub washrooms. Unlike Charlie Parker, who never repeated himself, the graffiti reiterated just one simple phrase: BIRD LIVES.