

cinating the more he learned about it. A final facet of Eno's thinking about knowledge is the idea that one's sum total of knowledge remains the same, as if one had a maximum available at any given moment, though its contents might shift:

Luis Bunuel said that in a film every object obscures another object. That's a great maxim for me. I have another version of that: Every increase in your knowledge is a simultaneous decrease. You learn and unlearn at the same time. A new certainty is a new doubt as well¹²

Culture and Information

Since the early 1980s, Eno has been preoccupied with working out a theory of "culture as a system of knowledge ... as a system of evolution in the same way that you might talk about genetics as a system of evolution ... But since this is practically all I ever think about, since it occupies practically all of my serious thinking time, I don't have any simple comments about it."¹³ He mentioned in 1981 that he hopes to publish this theory in one form or another, but as yet all we have is a handful of typically Enoesque, thought-provoking fragments. He sees all human culture as a system for the transfer of information, directly analogous to genetics, in the sense that "all creatures transmit information about their environment genetically."

Culture is all human behaviour, outside of pure instinct. Everything we do is cultural: gardening, cooking, different fashions, architecture.

What artists do a lot, in music in particular, is look at culture in the world. Music doesn't depict something, it's about other music. So quite a lot of the business of "culture merchants" like myself is studying how culture works – how it changes and how it changes us.¹⁴

One view of the history of culture, and of specific art forms such as music, holds that the primary role of the creative artist is to innovate, the result being a sort of linear progress or evolution in a (we hope) positive direction. Eno finds this view old-fashioned and outmoded. The artist, according to Eno,

"re-mixes" – he *perpetuates* a great body of received cultural and stylistic assumptions, he *re-evaluates* and re-introduces certain ideas no longer current, and then he also innovates. But the "innovation" part might be a much smaller proportion than we usually think. Consequently, I started to suspect that the palette of the painter or artist was incredibly broad – that it was the whole history of art. There's nothing linear about evolution at all: it is a process of trying to stay in the same place, of trying to maintain an identity in a changing landscape.¹⁵

¹² Grant, "Eno Against Interpretation," 29.

¹³ Jim Aikin, "Brian Eno," *Keyboard* 7 (July 1981), 66.

¹⁴ Jensen, "Sound of Silence," 24-5.

¹⁵ Hutchinson, "Eno: Place #13," n.p.