

# DANCING WITH DUMONT: INDIVIDUALISM AT AN EARLY MORNING MELBOURNE RAVE

— FEATURE ARTICLE —

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## ABSTRACT

Drawing from research into Australian bush doof festivals and raves, this paper details the happenings at an early morning conscious clubbing rave in Melbourne, Australia. I draw from my ethnographic research and from the work of Louis Dumont to demonstrate how the forms of sociality and subjectivity that emerge within the morning rave relate to deeper cultural and symbolic dynamics of individualistic societies. I use a Dumontian lens to analyse the dancing, attire and grounding exercises at the rave to help elucidate a deeper understanding of these ritual practices. The ravers are bringing forth an individualistic conception of human subjectivity and human sociality through their lived actions. Thus, the rave is not a mere reflection of individualism but a *live* creation of it.

KEYWORDS: rave, EDM, vibe, ritual, dance, holism, individualism, Dumont

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## THE RAVE IN-AND-OF-ITSELF

A group of fluorescent revellers snake down an alley. The beat stomps through the brickwork, a drum call or a noise complaint in the making. We walk towards an open doorway where a spandex-clad woman inspects our tickets and thumbs us eagerly onwards. Passed the ticket inspector, we walk into a large hall, a gutted out gymnasium that has been dressed up in streamers, banners and plastic mirror balls.

There is no dress code. People wear anything from gym clothes to animal-print leotards. There are many brightly coloured sneakers and lots of glitter and zinc cream. Some people wear homemade headdresses while others wear sweatbands and all kinds of jingle jangle spangled bangles. Flamboyance seems mandatory.

Though it is an all-ages event, the majority of participants range from 18 to 35. Adults seem to make up for the absence of children by blowing bubbles and throwing glitter and wearing pyjamas and pacifier necklaces.

The dance floor is in the centre of the room, framed by a black rectangular stage on top of which a DJ station has been placed. Most participants leave their personal belongings, their handbags or spare clothing, at the periphery of the room before entering the dance space.

The rave has its own gravitational pull. Generally, those just arriving stand at the sidelines and sway subtly or nod to the music before moving into the crowd. This transition from the outside to the inside is emphasized by an obvious change in people's body language. Once surrounded by others in the dance space, people will quickly move from relatively reserved and understated gestures towards more extroverted and markedly intensified dance movements.

There are aerobics instructors on the stage in front of the DJ. But rather than regimented workout sequences, they perform their own individuated movements, just like the crowd. There is a relay of energy between the instructors and the crowd, and both parties encourage and maintain the other's level of hyperactivity and spontaneous expression.

Radical self-expression is the aim. The individual and their expressive individuality are paramount. The crowd is a mass of smaller self-enclosed but self-expressive monads, each maintaining their radical autonomy as individuals while also opening themselves up to larger states of collective joy and togetherness. There is the sense of immersion among strangers all following the same beat, but experiencing it individually.

Michael Bull has noted that this is often the nature of aesthetic experience within late capitalism.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, Small has noted that this individuation of aesthetic experience is an anomaly in the history of the human race (1998: 39). Throughout most of human history, aesthetic experience has occurred among members of the same community who were, fundamentally, not strangers (Ibid.: 39). It is only within large-scale societies of the modern type that communities of strangers emerge and communal events populated by strangers become a frequent occurrence. To go to a morning dance party and share aesthetic experiences with strangers would be strange within non-modern communities, but in modernity this is the primary way in which people have aesthetic experiences with others.

At the morning rave people are together but alone or, as Turkle would put it, alone together (2011: 1). However, rather than focusing on the specific technological or politico-economic situations that may give rise to this aesthetic experience I wish to focus on the ritual aspects that underlie it. I see this experience of collective individuation as indicative of not only a type of neo-liberal listening but of a deeper individualism latent within Western capitalism in general. I see individualism as the guiding substance of the ritualized behavior at the morning rave.<sup>2</sup> Ritual is, as Sloterdijk has said of religion, anthropotechnical; it ties consciousness and social relations to reality (2009: 16).

I do not see ritual as the mere formulaic playing out of preconceived cultural representations. Rather, I use ritual here as a *process* or *virtuality* infused with creative and originary potentialities (Turner 1969: 131, Kapferer 2004: 47).<sup>3</sup> Here, ritual is seen as a process that can “create or generate original circumstances for human psychological and social existence” (Kapferer 2004: 37). Ritual has the capacity to transform people, to create new modalities and alter the very ground of being, to regenerate and reorient human realities. It has the ability to modify human consciousness and social relations by acting upon them directly.

## SURROUNDED BY SOUND

At the morning rave people leave their clothes at the periphery of the dance space as if they are leaving their worldly personas behind. They enter the dance space as total strangers with their identities wiped clean. They come together and dance. They are together but, at the same time, individuated by the speaker stacks that surround them and the sonic dominance which saturates their perceptual faculties (Henriques 2011: xvi). In addition to the sound that surrounds people, there is a psychedelic lightshow which, even in the middle of the day, throbs outwards into the crowd in pulsating onslaughts.

In many ways the sound system is set up like giant headphones that surround and enclose the dancers. This enclosed arrangement should allow the sound to enter the dancer's body unobstructed. It aspires to provide a direct pathway to their perceptual faculties. Headphones internalize sound by placing it inside the head. The headphones of the dance space place sound inside the bodies of dancers through supraliminal pathways such as sub-bass, which is often not heard but felt as a pressure in the abdomen or the inner ear (see Jasen 2016<sup>4</sup>). Being surrounded by sound generates a sense of immersion for dancers, a feeling of being inside a larger body that encompasses the individual. In this situation, sound is something that exists apart from the human, coming from the outside<sup>5</sup>, but yet able to enter and intertwine with the human being's very being-in-the-world. Through sound a *felt* sense of immersion is created. Throughout the rave, participants work on this immersion as they attempt to create a sense of *oneness* amongst each other. This state of immersion is lived and felt through ritual practice.

The most common of these practices is dance, which becomes a way of being both inside the music and of it. As Sheets-Johnstone notes, immersed within the aesthetic experience, “the dancers and the dance are one” (2015: 363-366). Any distance between the subject and

the aesthetic object is bridged by the aesthetic experience. Dancing turns oneself inwards towards a form of feeling that exists within the dancer but which is only realized within the aesthetic experience. Dancing is a way of not only expressing internal emotionals; at the same time it is a way of sharing emotions with others by drawing them into the dance. In the dance space at the rave there is a sense of unification between separate people who are immersed within the same aesthetic experience. Here, dancing is a way of extending the aesthetic into the social world, a way of visualizing it for others. As Kapferer notes, the movement of dance “spatializes the temporal structure of music”, because dance is an objectified embodiment of the inner experience of music (1991: 265-266). Dance is a communication of inner emotive life, but also a way of drawing others into this aesthetic experience. Further, dancing becomes a way of extending oneself outwards into the proximate psychosocial fields of others; the sense of personal self-containment, which people feel holds their sense of separateness from others.

In the dance space the beat never stops. The track may change, but the beat remains. While one song is playing, the DJ is already beat matching (syncing tempo or beats per minute with the next song. Beat matching blends songs into each other, creating one continuous rhythmic unfolding. The dancers bob along, ensuring they keep up with the beat.

At some raves people take various stimulants to continue dancing and to enhance the experience of the event, but not here. This is “conscious clubbing”, drug-free raving. Participants endure without the help of any stimulants besides the highly caffeinated energy drinks and hot beverages offered at the pop-up food stand.

One of the rave’s maxims is *Rave your way into the day*. The disavowal of drugs indicates that this is not only an experiment in sobriety, but also an experiment in the ability of music alone to move people, to reinvigorate them and to pass on a vital energy. The rave occurs from 6am to 9am, in a time-space outside of the workday. Here, people expect the music and dance to revitalize and ready them for the work day, but also to reconnect them with a community of like-minded people. Revitalization here concerns the individual’s wellbeing and the regeneration of the whole community. Importantly, the regeneration of the whole relies on the activities of the individual part.

The DJ shouts things at the crowd like “are you ready?” and the ecstatic crowd replies with “woo!” or “yeah!”. The DJ builds arpeggios and syncopated melodies on top of the beat, increasing the music’s intensity and switching to double-time as the dancers push their bodies further and further to keep up.

Some men have decided to shed their shirts and singlets and are gyrating around topless. They squelch their stomachs and pound their chests while shouting indiscernible affirmations about the music and the overall vibe of the room.

A woman in a onesie (a one-piece garment that covers the legs and torso) walks around with a big placard that has *FREE HUGS* printed upon it. She smiles and embraces people in the crowd, squeezing their bodies into hers, enraptured in conviviality. A group of D.I.Y contortionists spontaneously climb upon the stage and perform their own yogic body origami, twisting in their limbs in blissful dislocations.

At one point, the crowd changes from a mass into an empty circle. People take turns moving into the centre to perform tiny spectacles for the encompassing crowd; a smiling hula-hoop dancer twirls around inside a plastic ring. The bass drops in and the circling crowd stops dancing and just stands there, watching the centrepiece revolve.

The centrepiece is completely interchangeable. This is the point. There is no nucleus, but yet one always appears. The crowd is a constantly moving hive. Anyone can have a go. The inside is empty, but at the same time, constantly populated by different people, who switch in and out. Heat and the sweat of mixing bodies bring forth the idea of solids melting together, and people try to lose themselves and become one with everyone else. The exercise becomes a mass exorcism of the individual, where each is ground down and swept up in the multitude. At the same time, the whole is completely dependent upon the individual performances of the parts. Here, we see an individualistic conception of immersion where any whole is made from the connections of separate parts. In this way, social relations manifests through ritual action.

## INDIVIDUALISM

In his 1986 text *Essays on Individualism*, Louis Dumont sees individualism as a specific constellation of values present within Western societies since, at least, the eighteenth century. For Dumont, the cardinal values within individualism are equality and liberty, which “assume as their common principle...the idea of the human *individual*” (1980: 38). Within individualism, when separated off from the whole of society, an individual maintains their integrity as a complete moral being, still embodying the ideals of liberty and equality. Thus, “humanity is made up of men, and each man is conceived as present, in spite of and over and above his particularity, the essence of humanity” (Dumont 1980: 38). Within each individual is the germinal seed of the wider social whole. The whole is contained within the individual part and the part can exist as a separate moral entity from the whole.

For Dumont, this differs greatly from traditional holistic societies. Within holistic societies the individual is a collective social being who “only possesses value in relation to the whole” (Dumont 1980: 42). In contrast, within individualistic societies the relation of the whole to its parts is inverted, and the whole is completely reducible to the part. If society is to emerge at all amidst individualism it must, therefore, emerge through individuals without the suppression of their cardinal values (Dumont 1980: 10).

In individualism, the part forms the whole through the coming together of parts and the actualization of liberty and equality. Dumont opposes the term “*societas*” to the holistic “*universitas*” to describe the modern understanding of society as an individualistic and economic coming-together of individuals with mutual self-interest (Dupont 1986: 74). *Societas* constitutes a social contract “by which the individuals composing it have ‘associated’ themselves in a society” (Dupont 1986: 74). This idea of coming together is missing in holistic societies where the part is always already within the whole, encompassed

by a holistic relation. The idea of society as a construct, as something willed into existence by the part, could only emerge within a value system where people were evaluated as individuals, as separated and self-enclosed parts.

According to Dumont, a particular concept of society and community emerges within individualism. This concept holds that the ideal form of sociality involves the coming together of individuals on an equalized plane of relations and the enactment of liberty and equality. At the morning rave, equalization occurs through collective dancing. A sense of positive egalitarian communion emerges which most participants refer to as a sense of oneness, or simply as the *vibe*. As I will argue, this is a form of sociality that corresponds to specific ideals within individualism. The poignancy, vitality and perceived revitalizing effects of this egalitarian sociality indicate the significance these ideals hold for people living within an individualistic value system.

The morning rave gives insight into the ways in which sociality and social identity are imagined and reimagined within individualistic societies. In addition to being a representation of wider cultural dynamics, the morning rave is a unique event that possesses its own structuring dynamics, sociality and social identity that are, ultimately, irreducible to outside structures. That is to say, the morning rave is not merely reflective or representational of the world outside of it; it is a modality of behavior and being that is distinct and in-and-of-itself. Through ritual action, the myth of an individualistic whole made from equalized parts is realized live.

## THE VIBE

Events like the morning rave come across as a kind of connective therapy for participants. They will often describe how overwhelmed they feel in their ordinary lives. The rave gives them an opportunity to escape this state of constant 24/7 on-ness and share a space of oneness with liked-minded people.

Oneness is produced through pure physicality, through real bodies sweating it out in a room. It is all about stripping back to a carnal state, being broken down to a raw form, to an elemental nature. Men tear their shirts off and dig their fingernails into their skin, tired of their earthly moulds, caught up in the *vibe*, trying to excavate the energy of the room from their chests. They feel it in and between their bodies. People invent new forms of proximity, dancing closely together, bumping into each other, touching each other's skin. It is all about touching and becoming familiar with each other, sharing space and time, creating togetherness through bodily presence. This rubbing together creates an invisible spark, an animate force that moves through bodies and seems to encompass the entire space. This immaterial force is the *vibe*.

The *vibe* is generally understood as a shared emotional atmosphere that is sensed by people intuitively, not through words but through body language (such as expressions, movements, posture, etc.). Graham St. John suggests that the term is derived from "vibration" and that it designates "an 'intuitive signal' that may be picked up from other people and the atmosphere"

(2012: 79). He states that the term's usage in rave as well New Age groups is likely to have originated with the theosophists, hermetic philosophers and spiritualists of the mid-nineteenth century who purported to "gauge, measure, reflect, and translate 'vibrations'; to offer universal readings of universal energy" (St. John 2012: 79). According to St. John, this term was adopted by the counterculture of the 1960s and 1970s and was then taken up by the Goa Trance groups of the 1980s that had a direct link to many of the hippies of the summer of love (St. John 2012: 80). Much of the music played at Australian rave events has strong links to Goa Trance, such as the various psychedelic trance genres. St. John describes how Goa Trance producers and DJs acknowledge their role in channelling this energy, with trance parties becoming "the chief means by which one could best participate in or connect with this 'energy' or 'vibe'" (2012: 80). The vibe is the best description for that which the DJ delivers to their audience. It is an energy that is transmitted in the music and taken up by bodies that dance among other bodies, each passing this energy to others and cumulatively increasing the vitality and animate force of the vibe.

As it is an intuitive energy, people do not identify the vibe so much as sense it. Further, the vibe is felt interpersonally. It emerges within the relations between people sharing a space. People transmit and receive vibes during interactions with each other through body language, gesture or verbal cues. As something subtle and intuitive, it may be experienced unconsciously and without the transmitter's knowledge or intention of it. The vibe always relates back to human emotion and emerges from the affective life shared by people within a social world.

The vibe possesses qualitative value. A good vibe manifests when people pass around positive energies. But a vibe can also involve non-human agents and the affective forces they muster. In the dance space, a good vibe manifests through the coming together of positive energy that spontaneously emerges between dancers at an EDM performance that optimizes that vibe. Crucial to a good vibe is people's ability to let go, be free, have fun and just dance. This amounts to people opening themselves up to their spontaneous affective life and going with the flow of the dynamic force that emerges within the EDM performance. This, I believe, also amounts to giving themselves over to the aesthetic experience and allowing themselves to become immersed within the aesthetic world.

The dance space is a community of people communicating and relating to each other through invisible signals, as if direct communication and relation were impossible. But there *is* a direct relation between people. It is a relationship generated through music and dance and defined by the vibe.

In the dance space people give so much and so little, everything and nothing, all at once. People throw themselves into ecstatic frenzies, losing themselves in dance. At the same time, they are all locked into self-enclosed, self-expressive dance movements. They do not always speak as the volume of the music can drown out all voices. They do not even really see each other as their vision is constantly blacked out or overloaded by psychedelic light shows. Further, people often dance with their eyes closed, closing off all outside stimuli in order to fully experience the music as sound. In many ways the participant's sensory-motor

schema is completely separated off from the wider social world and locked in with EDM. Participants are more preoccupied with how the music or the lights hit them and how they react through dance, than how they interact with each other. The participant is entangled in the dynamics of the dance space, their sensorium holistically targeted by the aesthetics that surround them. Saturated in those aesthetics, they are locked out from direct human interaction. Nonetheless, a sense of community and togetherness between people persists, grounded in the idea that everybody is there to be together and to discover some form of connection and oneness together.

This sense of community and togetherness occurs while being surrounded by aesthetic forms. Are aesthetic forms necessary for community to form? The entire dance space is set up for aesthetic immersion, for the sound to surround and the lights to hit people from a multiplicity of shifting positions. It is from this elemental setup that a state of oneness emerges. This is the paradox of community in the dance space: a state of oneness, a holistic togetherness formed from the coming together of people who are isolated and atomized.

Communion can only occur through the leveling of every individual into a single Individual. This is the Individual of individualism, the non-social monad existing outside the social world and only creating sociality through equivalent relations with other individuals who are all equal. Thus, communion can only be generated through the assertion of individualistic values such as liberty and equality.

## SAMENESS OVER DIFFERENCE

This sameness is achieved in interesting ways. Besides work attire, people also wear plastic Native American headdresses, zinc cream war paint, Aztec print leggings and boho-chic kimonos; and they refer to themselves and each other as members of a tribe.

Here, anyone can be anyone because everyone is, ultimately, an equal individual. Any signs of distinction or difference are merely masks to be torn away to reveal everyone's underlying sameness.

Sameness is, in many ways, easy at this event; those in attendance are all of Anglo-Celtic Australian ethnicity. Although it occurs in Melbourne, a multicultural urban centre and Australia's second largest city, this conscious clubbing event is still attended by primarily White Australians of Anglo-Celtic descent. In many ways, as Kapferer has discussed in greater detail, individualism in Australia is the dominant hegemonic culture (2012: 88). It is the culture of the dominant class, which to this day is White Australia. This is seen at the rave, particularly in relation to the way that Otherness appears. Devouring and extinguishing Otherness, individualism reveals itself as an expression of dominance by dressing up and dressing down difference.

Difference is first checked and then balanced. It is marked or worn upon the body and then stripped or washed off as the dancing proceeds. The body must be taken back to its natural undifferentiated state so that people can relate to each other as one and the same. This exoticism of difference, wearing faux indigenous outfits, is not a retreat into a non-

modern primitivism brings forth of the primordial egalitarian state within individualism. It symbolizes the enactment of a state of absolute liberty and equality.

As Philip J. Deloria notes on the dressing up as Native Americans in the US, playing the Other is tied into the assertion of one's own cultural ideals. For Americans, "Indianness offered a deep, authentic aboriginal Americanness...To play Indian has been to connect with a real Self, both collective and individual" (Deloria 1998: 183). At the morning rave and at electronic dance music festivals in general, Australians dress up and play as Native Americans and Indigenous Australians and all amounts of other conquered people. This affirms the individual and reasserts the primacy of individualist values; it is not about the Other. Here, the artificiality of difference is proven in the application and removal of tribal makeup and fake primitive attire. Mimetically, the Other appears to be sacrificed so that the individual can re-emerge, fully intact. Just as the "routine social mask" of work-wear is left at the periphery of the dance space, the masks of difference are sweated away and discarded to reveal the "true" individual beneath (Kapferer 2012: 188). This is a kind of sacrificial gesture, a type of symbolic human sacrifice<sup>6</sup> in which the Other is constructed only to be erased through the shedding of difference. From this erasure, an ideal sociality can emerge, a whole made from equal parts. At the rave this ideal sociality characterized by an individualistic whole is discussed in terms of oneness and the vibe.

The vibe is generated and maintained through techniques besides music and dancing. These include grounding and centring exercises such as holding hands, breathing deeply and massaging each other. Grounding is about being earthed and becoming present in a particular space and time encompassed by other human beings. Grounding aims to develop an awareness of the body and its internal and interpersonal energies (Manné 2004: 125). This occurs through various exercises, such as breathing or touching, targeting the body's "energy field" to "tune" into the energies of other people and places and "learn how they affect us" (Manné 2004: 125). Touching works to focus on how the body touches and is touched. This is said to bring about a more vivid awareness of one's body and an acknowledgment that it is, fundamentally, a body "being held in space" (Picucci 2017: 145). People imagine sending negative energies out of their bodies, down through their feet and into the earth for "transmutation", while also focusing on the earth's energy "as it pulses at the soles of your feet and harmonizes with you there" (Summer 2004). You then allow this energy to travel up through the feet to circulate throughout the entire body. This revitalized energy, pregnant with positivity, is then sent out from the body and into the atmosphere to be soaked up by others. This is why people form a circle by holding hands when grounding: they are more easily affected by another person's positive energy. Their held hands become wires connected in a larger circuit board of reenergizing nodes.

The energy emanates from people being present in a room full of others, each holding another's hand. Grounding harnesses each individual's energy and sends this energy on, through people's hands and into each other. Togetherness is founded through the coming together of individual parts. It is maintained through individual self-expression and intentionality, through the invisible releases of individual energy each adding up and

circulating through the larger whole. Holding hands together, embracing each other with touch, intimate gestures shared amongst strangers—these open people up and wipe away personal boundaries people maintain outside the rave. Grounding is, thus, also about being ground down to an elemental condition: a body in a room full of other bodies. At the same time, this reduction is a reduction to the individual and its elemental state of liberty and equality. Togetherness can only come through the coming together of free and equal parts.

At the periphery of the dance space, the hosts have set up a bicycle-powered juicer. A blackboard on a stand next to it reads ‘Bike and Blend: Pedal your own smoothie’. Rather than providing pre-processed juice, participants can produce their own juice through the exertion of their bodies. The participants pedal the bicycle which produces enough energy to power the blender attached to the front of the bike. As the participants pedal, the blender slices and mixes fresh fruit and vegetables chosen by the participants. The juice is pure, authentic and real, and the participants themselves are brought into the production process. They are aware of every ingredient, and they use their own bodies to produce the juice.

The human-powered juicer bike extracts energy from people and converts it into a productive force, while also making refreshments that aim to revitalize and re-energize the pedaling raver. The vital energy, the vibe, that the raver receives from the music and the crowd is passed through the bicycle to be converted into more energy, which the raver will then take back out into the dance space, further enhancing the vibe.

The vibe is the individualistic whole made through the coming together of equalized parts, namely individuals who can only commune through their sameness. This is reflected in the ritual action present at the rave, such as collective dancing, the dressing up and shedding of difference and the grounding rite. Through ritual actions, the power of individualism is revitalised, and its symbols of parts coming together to create an egalitarian whole are brought forth in the present. Through ritual action, individualism is continually brought into the lived realities of those whom it encompasses. Ritual is anthropotechnical, which Sloterdijk defines as a type of anthropogenesis through repetitive practice that transforms the human condition. To quote Sloterdijk, anthropotechnics are “methods of mental and physical practising by which humans from the most diverse cultures have attempted to optimize their cosmic and immunological status in the vague risks of living and acute certainties of death” (Sloterdijk 2009: 10). They are symbolic prosthetics embedded in lived human action and tied to the survival and self-creation of human cultures. Rituals are anthropotechnical in that they transmit symbolic frameworks into the lived realities of the human beings who enact them.

At the rave, dancers create a living whole made from physically equalized parts. In the grounding rite participants hold hands in a circle, equalising themselves symbolically as well as physically. Again, the mythic and the symbolic are embedded in the lived actions of the human beings who experience and enact them. The morning ravers are not blind puppets of cultural forms beyond them. Rather, they actively bring social relations and consciousness into being by raving. The morning rave is not a mere reflection of individualism but an active anthropotechnical creation of it.

## NOTES

- 1 See Bull 2002, 2005 and 2007.
- 2 Roy Rappaport's (1999) emphasis on ritual over myth far exceeds that of other anthropologists of ritual such as Geertz, Douglas and Turner. For Rappaport, ritual is not only a way of actualizing or performing myth. It is also a way of bringing forth that which cannot be expressed within myth. As Rappaport notes, "...certain meanings and effects can best, or even *only*, be expressed or achieved in ritual' (1999: 30). However, whereas we might position Turner's understanding of ritual performance as creative, Rappaport's is closer to functionalist accounts. For Rappaport ritual "entails the establishment of convention, the sealing of social contract, the construction of the integrated conventional order" (1999: 27). Ritual socializes and cements social bonds. As Rappaport notes, "ritual contains within itself not simply a symbolic representation of social contract, but tacit social contract itself. As such ritual...is *the* basic social act" (1999: 138). Thus, Rappaport's account of ritual is somewhat conservative and closer to functionalist accounts of ritual that reduce it to a form of catharsis or a repetitive reproduction of social order.
- 3 Following from Turner's *The Ritual Process*, Bruce Kapferer has developed his own distinct formulation of ritual practice as a kind of "virtuality". Kapferer's ideas on the virtuality of ritual come from his extensive studies of the Suniyama exorcism and healing ritual in Sri Lanka (Kapferer 1991: Kapferer 1997). For Kapferer, the virtual is to be distinguished from the virtuality of cyber technology or the virtuality of an alternative reality, and is, instead, a term he draws from Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's (1988) understanding of the virtual as well as Susanne Langer's (1997) notions of virtuality in aesthetic processes (Kapferer 1997: 37). For Kapferer, rituals, through the gathering together of a multiplicity of aesthetic and affective forces, are able to construct a virtuality that is "really real", a "complete and filled-out existential reality" that is distinct from the reality outside of the ritual, but which really exists (1997: 47). Further, though Kapferer stresses the non-referential nature of ritual virtuality to external reality, he also sees ritual as "a vital dimension" of "the really real or, for want of a better term, actuality" (1997: 47). What he means here is that rituals allow people to pull away and fold back from ordinary reality in order to come into contact with vital life processes, the very processes found in the everyday construction of reality. Kapferer notes the chaotic and continuously forming, merging and flowing nature of everyday human realities (1997: 48). Drawing from Deleuze and Guattari, he uses the term "chaosmos" to get at this chaotic dimension of reality, which is "fractal-like, always changing and shifting, immanent within and structuring differentiating in form, crosscutting and intersecting as persons move through space and alter standpoint" (1997: 48). In contrast, the virtual reality of ritual is a "slowing down of the tempo of everyday life" and a "holding in abeyance" of some of the vital processes of lived reality (Kapferer 1997: 48). Thus, the virtuality of ritual is intimately connected to reality, not through reference or representation, but through its engagement with "the compositional structuring dynamics of life in the very midst of life's processes" (Kapferer 1997: 48). Ritual is not a symbolic model of lived processes but "a method for entering within life's vital processes and adjusting its dynamics" (Kapferer 1997: 48). Ritual is, thus, intimately entangled within life and its living processes. Both Kapferer's and Turner's approaches to ritual differ greatly from other anthropologies of ritual such as Schechner (2002), Bell (1992) and

- Shore's (1999), which instead of focusing on the event of the ritual itself, attempt to construct a universal concept of ritual beyond phenomenological particularity.
- 4 As Jasen notes, sub-bass has the capacity to produce a pressure “thousands of times more powerful than those frequencies involved in speech”, by condensing the air it passes through, making it feel thicker and heavier (2016: 1). In these situations people experience the low-end as an ethereal substance, a pressure that touches the inner ear before it is even cognized and heard. This invisible presence escapes the dancer's conscious awareness, inducing “feelings of buoyancy, weight and flow” as it fills the inner ear and “disrupts perceptions of motion and balance” (Jasen 2016: 2). It is this “swimmingness” of perception that produces *aquatic* or *oceanic* descriptions of low-end sound experiences (Jasen 2016: 2). Thus, a sense of immersion is not only idealized but also physically generated by low-end sound and the specific positioning of sound systems within the dance space.
  - 5 Music seems to appear from nothing (from silence). As opposed to other forms of art such as painting or sculpture, you do not come upon music but, rather, music comes upon you, seizing you fully rather than being seized or sought out by your attention.
  - 6 Dumont (1986) has discussed elsewhere the ways in which the creation of a pseudo-whole within individualism at times calls for the actual sacrifice of undesirable Others.

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