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Music and ritual between oral traditions
and virtual societies

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On October the 14th, 2011 the worldwide technological industry was marked by the historic release of Apple's iPhone 4S; Historic for mainly two reasons: firstly, because of the sudden death of the man that envisioned and realised it, according to many one of the greatest visionaries of our times, Steve Jobs, who ironically passed away nine days earlier on October the 5th, 2011 after overseeing its release up to its last step; Secondly because of this groundbreaking standpoint of the still-on-going development of the Smartphone series: Smartphones would possess, from that point and on, apart from the fastest internet connection ever¹, an intriguingly interesting application called *Siri*, a voice control system, which executes instantly all kinds of voice commands. "Siri understands what you say, knows what you mean, and even talks back" notes the description and they mean it literally: the young boy featured on the official Apple TV-ad asking his personal iPhone 4S, what the weather would be like², illustrates for viewers and audiences a more or less naïve, subconscious reference/reminiscence on childhood's paracosmic acquaintances; only this time, it has nothing to do with humanoid imagination whatsoever: this multifunctional device is yet another milestone towards artificial intelligence and as such towards the tangibility of virtual reality and its greater independence from physical reality. It is exactly this accelerating independence process strived by digital technologies in a global scale that this paper will endeavour bringing into discourse. Specifically to make remarks on the current state of this process and especially to its relational consequences upon physical reality, in the form of the oral and specifically of the musical oral traditions, the latter here defined as the result of ritual inter-communicational practises finally concluding upon suggestions for the gapping of both.

The quest for the realisation of virtual thus highly interactive/ multimedia technologies, goes back at least for Steve Jobs as early as the 1980's. The latter, very well aware of the tremendous possibilities and potential of the new digital technologies and having already envisioned and realised his legendary Macintosh back in the 80's, was claiming and in a way prophesising upon the release of the new version of his NeXTcube in 1991 (the first "interpersonal" computer, with a ground-breaking multimedia email system) that "interpersonal computing is going to revolutionise human communications and group work"³; Jobs' vision would soon after literally give not only the means towards the free lance of Tim

¹ 'iPhone 4S Features', retrieved on December the 10th, 2011, <http://www.apple.com/iphone/features/>

² 'Siri: snow today TV-advert', retrieved on December the 10th, 2011, <http://www.apple.com/iphone/videos/#tv-ads-siri>

³ Computimes, 'Interpersonal computing – the third revolution?', New Straits Times (230), May 31, 1990, retrieved on December the 10th, 2011. <http://news.google.com/newspapers?id=YK5UAAAIAIAJ&sjid=cZADAAAIAIAJ&pg=4008%2C4314860>

Berners-Lee's WWW project in 1989 to the public⁴, mainly because of NeXTcube's innovative Ethernet port⁵ but also an immense facilitation along with the inspiration (by means of the new interactive/ multimedia features) towards the establishment of networking possibilities, which ever since and especially after the free lance of the wireless internet in 2001⁶, seem to evolve infinitely.

Blinking more substantially into the background and the aetiology of the evolution of these contemporary technological phenomena and the very beginnings of these elaborated kinds of "human communication", one naturally comes across the broader history of technological culture as early as the 15th century and the broader framework of the so-called 'modernity': according to many scholars, at the beginnings of the Reformation and later on of the Enlightenment, both as an attempt to distinguish ourselves from the religious doctrines imposed by the church and as such to seek of an explanation of the cosmos based this time upon neo-aristotelian orthological criteria. This quest, termed by Marianne Gronemeyer as a "project of controlling nature" was clearly aiming towards a "careful disempowerment of God"⁷ and led to the establishment of a genealogy of the "homo creator"⁸ ever since. Gutenberg's printing press, would enormously facilitate and quicken transmission but primarily the distribution of the new ideas, which breaded the concept of a "homo accelerandus"⁹ and inspired its subsequently acquired tools: among others foremost the mechanical clock, which set the frameworks for the later on industrial production, leading to the revolutionary exactness of digital technologies.

Historicity is more or less up to this end, quite often taken into account and commemorated in a sometimes even nostalgic timbre; it is though worth noticing that we as western societies, consciously or unconsciously seem to neglect the fact that modernity as well as techno-culture in general, eventually turned to be intertwined and eventually identical to the various economical conditions and mostly with the various economical necessities of the times. Our

⁴ Rachel Greene, *The Internet Art*, London: Thames and Hudson, 2004, p.19.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.* p. 180.

⁷ Marianne Gronemeyer, *Das Leben als letzte Gelegenheit: Sicherheitsbedürfnisse und Zeitknappheit*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1993, pp. 42-43; cf. Martin Lister, Jon Dore, Seth Giddings, Iain Grant, Kieran Kelly (Eds.), *New Media: a critical introduction*, second edition, London: Routledge Publications, 2009, p. 80 on Humanism: "their emphasis on explaining the world through the human capacity for rational thought rather than a reliance on Christian theology...Humanist theory tends only to recognize human individuals as hang agency (and power and responsibility) over the social forms and the technologies they create and even through rational science the power to control and shape nature".

⁸ *Ibid.* p. 131.

⁹ *Ibid.* p. 122.

contemporary times would designate and expose it at its best: the allegedly end and the transformation of modernity into a post-modernity in the early 70's, came only after its two main forces, infinite optimism and the belief of perpetual evolution no matter of which costs, showed severe signals of inapplicability causing major social disappointment, not least inflation and unemployment rates to rise enormously. The various Keynesian economical models, which attempted to "mild the crisis...with social democratic frame works" would only proven to be insufficient and "weak". Ultimately attempts of "reduc[-ing] the cost of production and cultivat[-ing] new markets", rapidly led to a 'neo-liberalism' "which freed the markets...and decentralized production" inaugurating thus an "internalisation"¹⁰ crusade: To the majority of our generation, the above description is perhaps best known as the beginnings of 'globalisation' and it is probably within these frames that the post-modern schema of the western world can be more fluently described.

Post-modernity has been unanimously accredited to have dismantled the so-called "great Narrative"¹¹ ever since its beginnings, signalling the end of 'identity as context' and the creation of "meta-concepts" of identity in a form of "differentiated and correlating patterns of life"¹²; Patterns, which in fact served and facilitated the on-growing financial necessities of the new economical models; Patterns that gave people, alias consumers freshly created motives, new constituting parts to look for within brand new global markets. Post modernity would inevitably acquire its own special tools and media to work with: the free launch of the Internet in the early 90's to the world wide market out of its governmental services¹³ along with the rapid development of personal computing as stated above, granted post-modernity an ideal "communication space" that kept the markets informed, in-contact and up-to date. In these media, no 'signifier – signified' relationship would be required, rather, as Lacan coined

¹⁰ Lister et alias, pp. 179-182.

¹¹ The term 'great Narrative' defined a.o. in Peter Rusterholz und Rupert Moser, *Form und Funktion des Mythos in archaischen und modernen Gesellschaften*, Bern: Berner Univ. Schriften, Bd. 43, 1999, p.39 under the terms of identity, culture and tradition; cf. Paul Connerton, *How societies remember: Themes in the social sciences*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989, pp. 61-71: a.o. on the post modern credo of deconstruction as the only solution to modernity; cf. Walter Benjamin, 'Das Kunstwerk im Zeitalter seiner technischen Reproduzierbarkeit' in *Aura und Reflexion. Schriften zur Kunsttheorie und Aesthetik*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2007, p. 382 where Benjamin speaks of the destruction of the "great Narrative" as the "liquidizing" of the value of tradition (cf. "Liquidierung des Traditionswertes") as a consequence of the technique of reproduction, which "updates the reproduced" and annihilates the original: "Die Reproduktionstechnik...löst das Reproduzierte aus dem Bereich der Tradition ab" (p.381); cf. Lister et alias, p.30.

¹² Translated from German "nebeneinander verschiedener Lebensentwürfe", cited here Rusterholz and Moser, p. 38.

¹³ Greene, pp. 18-19.

it at best, a relation of “floating signifiers”¹⁴, “defined by networks of relational differences between themselves”¹⁵. In other words audiences would be transformed to global users¹⁶ and thus to global consumers. Digital technologies would soon after present and quickly enough establish and further elaborate ‘networking technologies’ presenting as early as 1996 the very first social networking project¹⁷ leading up to 2004 and Mark Zuckerbergs Facebook.

It would be not an exaggeration however to agree to Katherine Haynes view that post-modernity transformed not just the markets but primarily the whole of the western human being, respectively to a “post-human”¹⁸. Anthropologically observed, this would be not a surprise, since these kinds of transformations have been happening throughout the ever since attested existence of mankind, whose adjustability into new social conditions guaranteed its survival. Likewise, it hasn’t been different in the case of postmodernity: neither had it been different back then at the beginning ’s of modernity.

Philosophers have been reflecting ever since on the very fact that modernity simply “purified” the western being not only from its religious context but also and primarily from its “mania and myth”¹⁹ and archaic prototypes²⁰ entangled within the roots of society so Theodor W. Adorno. By taking them away and handing them over to technology and to capitalistic regimes, it simply granted them the role of the mythical, of the all-potent and thus of the magical: to use the words by W. Benjamin it became a “cult”, a new “religion” by itself. This “technological imaginary”²¹ became the vehicle for western economies to thrive even since by simply making use of and applying the principle of “Totemism”, coined in this context among others in 1930’s by Ernst Cassirer²². The depiction of an almighty Totem, on which

¹⁴ Lacan’s theory of ‘floating signifiers’ as cited and thoroughly commented in Katherine Hayles, *How we became posthuman: virtual bodies in cybernetics, literature and information*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2010, p. 30.

¹⁵ Ferdinand de Saussure cited in Hayles, p. 30.

¹⁶ Lister, Dore et alias, p. 221.

¹⁷ The very first social networks were launched in the mid 90’s in the form of “general online communities”. It was as late as the late 90’s and 2000’s that networks focused on “user profiles”. ‘Social networking service’, retrieved on March the 27th, 2012, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Social_networking_service#History

¹⁸ Consistently thematised in Hayles; cf. Stefan L. Sorgner und Michael Schramm (Hg.), *Musik in der antiken Philosophie: Eine Einführung*, p. 25: “Die Auflösung der Einheit der Kultur ist bezeichnend für unsere gegenwärtige, postmoderne oder vielleicht sogar schon posthumanistische Lebenswelt”.

¹⁹ Theodor Adorno in Walter Benjamin, *Kairos: Schriften zur Philosophie*, Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 2007, p. 263: “Alle Boden musste einmal von der Vernunft urban gemacht, vom Gestrüpp des Wahns und des Mythos gereinigt werden. Dies soll für den 19. Jahrhundert geleistet werden”.

²⁰ Connerton, pp. 61-62.

²¹ Lister, Dore et alias, p. 37.

²² Ernst Cassirer, *Philosophie der symbolischen Formen, II. Teil: das Mythische Denken*, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1964, pp. 231-232; Totemism was introduced by several analytics, not least by Freud and later on by Durkheim; Durkheim’s totemism also mentioned in Connerton, pp. 49-50.

people can displace their existential agonies became reality with the invention of the radio, followed by that of the television and later on of the computer. The invention of android hardware and Smartphones in the 2000's²³ would simply complement, vary and elaborate the above concept.

We however as post-modern people would not just learn to employ the same concepts, we would also learn to apply them in a global scale not by replacing the pre-existing local ones, but rather by dismantling them, in an attempt of adjusting them and making it manipulative to the new financial necessities: in a magnified reality that would mean that centuries old traditions, idioms, behaviours and regional *modi Vivendi* worldwide, left untouched by the locality of modernity in the western world, would in a quite natural manner have to be brought down to pieces and be newly questioned from their basics. As they were founded upon *ritual linearity* and therefore meant to be orally transmitted primarily within ritual contexts and thus greatly undocumented, unregistered, these traditions turned to be most vulnerable when it came to the breaking down of their *prima materia*: the memories and recollections of the communities outliving and preserving them alias their collective character within their ritual syntax²⁴.

Today “over 850 000 android devices are [being] activated every day”²⁵ and more than a billion people²⁶ across the globe are active users of social networking, developing, constructing and arranging their virtual profiles, their virtual identities minute by minute via networks such as Facebook or Twitter. As far as Facebook is concerned, its official ratings, expect the number of its users to exceed the one billion globally sometime in 2013²⁷: and so will the time spend on online networking.

²³‘Android operating system’, retrieved on March the 05th, 2012, [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Android_\(operating_system\)](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Android_(operating_system))

²⁴Connerton, p.21: “...we all come to know each other by asking for accounts, by giving accounts, by believing or disbelieving stories about each other’s parts or identities...The narrative of one life is part of an interconnecting set of narratives; it is embedded in the story of those groups from which individuals derive their identity”.

²⁵‘Android phones pass 700000 activations per day’, retrieved on March the 05th, 2012, <http://techcrunch.com/2011/12/22/android-700000/>

²⁶‘845 million monthly active users at the end of December 2011’, in ‘Facebook latest news, announcements and media resources’, retrieved on March the 5th, 2012,

<http://newsroom.fb.com/content/default.aspx?NewsAreaId=22>; Twitter (founded 2006) counts approx. 100 million users as of September 2011, in Graeme Mcmillan, ‘Twitter reveals active user number’, retrieved March the 27th, 2012, <http://techland.time.com/2011/09/09/twitter-reveals-active-user-number-how-many-actually-say-something/>.

²⁷ The future of Facebook, also in numbers, thoroughly discussed in Jakob Steinschaden, *Phänomen Facebook: Wie eine Webseite unser Leben auf dem Kopf stellt*, Wien: Carl Ueberreuter Verlag, 2010, pp. 189-193.

A survey conducted by Nielsen for the years 2007-2009 for the U.S. showed that „ [time spent is] not just increasing [by] 210% year-over-year and the average time per person [by] 143%”²⁸, in many cases is even leading to what specialist psychologists call Internet Addiction Disorders (IAD) along with the newly Facebook Addiction Disorder (FAD)²⁹. IAD’s have been recently categorized by the American Medical Association as “psychic disturbances”³⁰, in which web-addictives are gradually undergoing a series of symptoms all of them ultimately leading to a loss of “interest of ...real to ...virtual life”³¹. According to recent studies undertaken on media entertainment consume, it has been showed that what is actually taking place, is not just a “pursuit of pleasure and amusement”, of “eudemonic purposes” or even of “ hedonic needs” but also a pursuit of the need of “searching for life’s purposes”. Interestingly enough it is exactly this aspect that clinical studies indicate as the main cause of Internet addiction. Specifically they showed that it is not the Internet that makes addictive, rather the user himself/ herself that struggles to satisfy his discomfort, his/ her “need for stimulation and diversion”, his/ her need for “social competence” and “risk-taking behaviour” in life³².

And here rises the question: In such virtual wanderings and gatherings are people perhaps desperately looking for a “place” to “transcendent their daily life”? A ‘magical’ place where they can escape their daily “routine”³³? A ‘sensation’ that might have been taken away from their traditional life patterns?³⁴

Baring in mind that the human being is attained on basic needs, that could sustain a sane, psychologically prosperous, and balanced life³⁵, perhaps we should seriously consider the fact

²⁸ ‘Time spent on social media sites up 82% year over year’, retrieved on November the 10th, 2011, <http://blog.nielsen.com/nielsenwire/global/led-by-facebook-twitter-global-time-spent-on-social-media-sites-up-82-year-over-year/>

²⁹ Antje Hornung and Helmut Lukesch, ‘Der unheimliche Miterzieher’ in *Verloren in Virtuellen Welten: Computerspielsucht im Spannungsfeld von Psychotherapie und Pädagogik*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht Verlag, 2009, pp. 94-95.

³⁰ Klaus Wöfling, ‘Ambulante Gruppenpsychotherapie bei Computerspielsucht’, in *Verloren in Virtuellen Welten: Computerspielsucht im Spannungsfeld von Psychotherapie und Pädagogik*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht Verlag, 2009, p. 134.

³¹ Michael Fenichel, ‘Facebook Addiction Disorder’, retrieved on March the 05th, 2012, <http://www.fenichel.com/facebook/>

³² Wöfling, p. 141; for both juveniles and post-juveniles.

³³ Jan Assmann, *Das Fest und das Heilige: Religiöse Kontrapunkte zur Alltagswelt*. Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlagshaus Gerd Mohn, 1991, p. 17.

³⁴ Cf. ‘Secondlife’ (www.secondlife.com), where participants can create a completely virtual life by using their avatars.

³⁵ Indicating the Maslowian hierarchy of needs, mentioned in Ron Tamborini, Nicholas Bowman, et alias, *Defining Media Enjoyment as the satisfaction of intrinsic needs*, *Journal of Communication*, 60:4, November 2010, pp. 758-777.

that the Internet, especially via the wireless technology and thus via the omnipresent virtual reality are now attempting to enact the role of the mythicists anew by re-creating the myth out of a new context. Even more this time, for the first time in its technological history, the re-enactment of *mythos* is perhaps even engulfing its social contextual origin by fulfilling its true essence: by becoming “the narrative aspect of a ritual praxis”³⁶.

The infinity of time and space, the possibility of active participation and the collective, communicational character particularly experienced within virtual social networks are just but a few indications to be identified along with the Internet’s mythical narrative as syntactical components of a ritual praxis³⁷. There are however some very crucial constituents, which even though less obvious, could nevertheless attest most convincingly the above assumption; Firstly a) the integration of tools and specifically of sound alias of music within, as well as in relation to the above ritual context ultimately aiming at the activation of the main objective of a ritual praxis: b) the identification to the depicted deity, as the personification of the honoured myth³⁸.

Ever since the beginnings of ritual practises as early as remote antiquity, music has been used as a tool, a “signal” or a “motto”³⁹, triggering a specific behaviour, in order for participants to enter a ‘process of identification’, which provoked the depicted honoured deity’s arrival⁴⁰ granting them eventually with “recovery” from their “woes” and “diseases”⁴¹. This process of identification would naturally evolve in the process of time taking various forms, depending on the respective cultural *dasein* of each tradition, without however losing the contact to its original syntax. Indicatively we can trace this process extensively in Plato’s Phaedrus where he describes this state as a *mania*⁴². Alternatively in his dialogue ‘Ion’, he uses the word “*katoché*...meaning literary to hold firmly, retain, contain, detain, possess”⁴³, or even

³⁶ Rusterholz and Moser, p.30 translated from German: Mythos als “die narrative Seite der rituellen Praxis”; cf. Bettina Schmidt, Einführung in die Religionsethnologie: Ideen und Konzepte, Berlin: Reimer Verlag, 2008, p. 100: “Mythen treten immer auf im Zusammenhang mit Ritualen”.

³⁷Extensive discussion on ritual syntax in Ulrike Dahm, Opfer und Ritus: Kommunikationstheoretische Untersuchungen, Marburg: Diagonal Verlag, 2003, pp. 68-70, p. 91, p.94, p. 112, pp. 178-179.

³⁸As to the role of the image, there has been an indirect reference above under the scope of ‘totemism’ and technology. Therefore it would be hereby suggested that the monitor/ desktop is to be brought in comparison to the depiction of the deity in the context of a rite. It is however to notice that even though the representation of the image, thus of the honored myth introduces the subject/ the theme of the rite to take place, it is the musical apparatus that sets the plot in motion. Cf. Gilbert Rouget, translation: Brunhilde Biebuyck, Music and Trance: A theory of the relations between Music and Possession, Chicago: The university of Chicago Press, 1985, p. 206.

³⁹ Rouget, p. 206.

⁴⁰ Ibid.

⁴¹ Ibid. p. 193; cf. *ritual linearity* within the oral traditions and customs as mentioned above.

⁴² Odysseus Hatzopoulos (Ed.), Plato: Phaedrus, Athens: Kaktos Editions, 1992, pp. 86-87.

⁴³ Rouget, p. 190.

“epipnoia” (inspiration)⁴⁴. In fact, the actual effect of *epipnoia* is to put the subject out of his senses (ekphron)” for make space for the spirit (pneuma) to enter (prefix ‘epi’) in the form of an inspiration (in + spirit= en + pneuma)⁴⁵. In a latter point in Phaedrus, the word “entheos” is also used (en-godded) a word also employed by Euripides in his Hippolytus, the latter speaking “of the state of Phaedra, who suffers from a hidden ill”⁴⁶. Euripides along with the other tragic poets represent an ingenious example of how this identification process, was able to be transformed in other forms as it has happened in the case of the ancient tragedy, during the time of classical Athens in the 5th century B.C⁴⁷. It is not to neglect that the single goal of the *dromenon* of a tragedy was to bring the spectator to an emotional resolution coined by Aristotle as *catharsis*, literally meaning a cleansing⁴⁸.

A few centuries later, Arab philosophers having translated much of the corpus philosophicus of the Greek intellectuals especially during the golden era of the Abbasid dynasty, adopted and used extensively the above process primarily within the arts and specifically in music, under the term of *tarab*: tarab to be best described as the state, in which musicians and public alike could attain this emotional highpoint that would resolve them from their worries⁴⁹. Not least, the Mevlevi Sufi order, also teaches that during their *Sama* ceremony, “due to the music and because he is supported by music...the possessed person publicly lives out, by means of dance, his identification with the divinity he embodies”⁵⁰. *Sama* literally means “audition” and “it consists essentially on hearing or listening to music, with the aim of attaining that kind of illumination, of divine contact, that is termed *wajd*, or trance”⁵¹. Indeed for many scholars, this identification or this process of approaching the divine is to be compared, to the state of possession, to the process of trance.

Reflecting on the assignment of music as a processional catalyst leading to a trance-like resolution of “diseases”, one would wonder whether it would be legitimate to bestow music the same role within virtual courses of action on the Web, as part of an assumed new kind of ritual praxis. Baring that in mind, one should nevertheless not neglect the historical fact, that

⁴⁴ Ibid. p. 191.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ Ibid. p. 190.

⁴⁷ On the origins, formation and context of the ancient Greek tragedy extensively in Ulrich von Wilamowitz-Moellendorff, transl. by Elias Tsirigkakis, *The attic tragedy*, Athens: Vaniias Publications, 2003.

⁴⁸ As described in the famous definition of ancient Greek tragedy, in Aristotle, *Poetics*: 1449b, Perseus digital Library, Medford: Department of classics of Tufts University, retrieved on March the 28th, 2012, <http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0056%3Asection%3D1449b>

⁴⁹ Rouget, p. 282.

⁵⁰ Ibid. p. 323.

⁵¹ Ibid. p. 270.

online communities, have defined Internet usage ever since its beginnings mostly through their musical thematic: in other words in the form of online music-sharing communities and that “the appeal of file-sharing music...drove demand for access to the Internet, more powerfully than any other single application”⁵². Attempts such as *LastFM* or *Pandora*, in which users based⁵³ their profiles entirely on music likes, were launched within a euphoric atmosphere on the idea of a free platform that would allow its participants to share their music likes for free. As Rachel Greene notices, “when the Internet was new, different and less commercial, it seemed more avant-garde” and there was “a kind of...exoticism in play”⁵⁴. In process of time many other platforms attempted to catch up on the concept, such as Napster, Kazaa or Limewire⁵⁵ attracting millions of people across the globe⁵⁶. Despite the early efforts by platforms such as *LastFM* to subtly launch a parallel discussion panel on the music exchanged, severe juristic copyright complications in the mid 2000’s forced these platforms towards either a commercialisation or a close down⁵⁷ something, which resulted to a severe loss of trust on behalf of the users and as such a reduction of their participation⁵⁸.

It was as late as October 2008 originally in Sweden and later on Germany that the world’s first “online audio distribution” and simultaneously social networking “platform”, SoundCloud was launched. Users could now share their own music files, record, mix and sample entirely their own material. Most importantly though they additionally could/ can launch a discussion panel on their music, which functions as an indispensable, coherent and organically necessary part to the whole⁵⁹. SoundCloud is currently an ongoing web-constant counting within its 4 years of application ca. 10 million users globally as of January 2012⁶⁰. Interestingly, the next one to join the concept would be the social networking giant Facebook.

In September 2011 Marc Zuckerberg announced that he was also about to build “a music community” out of his Facebook platform. As cunningly stated on ‘The Guardian’, now “it is

⁵²Mark Katz, ‘Listening in Cyberspace’ in *New Media and Technocultures Reader*, London: Routledge Publications, 2011, p. 285; cf. Greene, p. 189.

⁵³ www.lastfm.com and www.pandora.com, even though the latter being restricted to US listeners.

⁵⁴ Greene, p.13.

⁵⁵ Limewire’s website is still inaccessible under court order.

⁵⁶ Napster for example, counted approximately 25 million users back in 2000/1 before shutting down. ‘Napster’, retrieved on March the 28th, 2012, <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Napster>

⁵⁷ Katz, p. 286; Online music sharing was famously ‘resurrected’ with the launching of *Itunes* and Steve Jobs’ ‘0, 99 cent songs’ idea in 2007 that brought life to the music industry.

⁵⁸ Later attempts such as YouTube, didn’t actually concentrate on music per se rather primarily on video files, thus more appended to the image instead to the sound.

⁵⁹ ‘Soundcloud Press’, retrieved on March the 28th, 2012, <http://soundcloud.com/press>

⁶⁰ ‘Thank you-10 million times’, retrieved on March the 28th, 2012, <http://blog.soundcloud.com/2012/01/23/ten-million/>

more than “like... its all about ‘listen’”. Zuckerberg, announced that Facebook was planning to transform its basic format: “The new buttons, will work in a similar way to the old ones, but send a message to your friends via your profile” on what you have just listen to, “wearing” any song you have just listen to on your profile “like a badge of honour”. Citing continued, “more importantly you will be able to do it all in real time and have a discussion in the context of what you are listening to” establishing of course “what you listen to, as the currency that record companies care about”⁶¹. Interestingly enough, Facebook even launched collaboration to Soundcloud, whose members can now use Facebook’s discussion platform to expand their discussion forums on their music, if of course they have already signed in for a Facebook membership⁶².

The establishment of music as a fundamental tool, within virtual social networking platforms and especially within Facebook as of 2011, consisted in my opinion the decisive step towards the unveiling of a conscious process on behalf of the current global financial/ social tendencies as described above: a process towards the retrieval and thus the reactivation of the centuries old diptych of ‘sound and rite’ or ‘music and rite’ within a virtual Web context. By gradually removing from the physical reality and subsequently transferring and transcribing archaic codes⁶³ or more scientifically stated “Jungian archetypes”⁶⁴, embedded for centuries within our “collective unconsciousness”⁶⁵, in a new digital virtual technological language, they managed, eloquently and gradually ever since the beginnings of modernity, to recreate and thus to evoke, now, more clearly than ever the compositional particles of ritual practises.

What is more, ever since their online launching these ‘virtual ritual practises’, have been consistently striving towards the persuasion of their participating users and thus consumers, for their credibility and authenticity, for their comparability and perhaps superiority to their physical equivalents. In order for that to be achieved however these new practises, had to

⁶¹ Ben Perreau, What do Facebook changes mean for music fans? Retrieved on November the 12th, 2012, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/music/musicblog/2011/sep/23/facebook-changes-music-fans>.

⁶² Thanks to its special URL, Soundcloud is able to adjust in other domains such as Facebook or Twitter, in contrast to the similarly conceived concept of MySpace, which was created to function exclusively on its own platform. Eliot van Buskirk, ‘Soundcloud threatens Myspace as music destination for twitter era’, retrieved March the 28th, 2012, <http://www.wired.com/epicenter/2009/07/soundcloud-threatens-myspace-as-music-destination-for-twitter-era/>

⁶³ Connerton, p. 27. On social codes of groups as the encapsulation of their memories; “remembering being...a coding...which enables us to distinguish and, therefore, to recall”; p.49: Richard Wollheim’s concept of a “ritual as a coded representation”; cf. Murir p. 6: “(some) focus on ritual as a kind of communication that allows people to tell stories about themselves; and still others see ritual as a collectively created performance, a specific kind of practice that constructs, maintains and modifies society itself”.

⁶⁴ ‘Jungian archetypes’, retrieved on March the 20th, 2012, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jungian_archetypes

⁶⁵ *ibid.*

confirm, the last and very crucial constitute of a ritual praxis: the evocation of a trance-like state of emotion alias their ability to bring their participants to an equivalent process of identification with the depicted deity, resolving them, i.e. resolving us from our contemporary diseases.

Baring in mind of the increasing number of Internet addicts, who clinically confirmed are searching for the resolution of their various existential “woes” and “diseases”, alias phobias and worries of our society in vain, it is perhaps the strongest of indication for us to consider how insufficient this attempt in process of time perhaps proves to be. Despite the abundance of possibilities which are now being called upon serving this purpose, from the above mentioned Smartphone series to iPads just to mention a few, all of them endeavouring imitating in digital as keenly as possible the human behaviour (the above mentioned *Siri* application of the 4S iPhone is a very tanning example of the attempts in artificial intelligence taking place), there exists at the moment a very fascinating discourse, in various aspects of culture and society in general, which shows signs of disbelief and in a way signs of criticism: criticism towards the general deficiency of technology to replace completely anthropologically amended codes of living and as such to replace ritual practises and objectives with artificial equivalents⁶⁶.

On March the 16th-17th, 2012 in Berlin an exceptional conference was held at the House of the Cultures of the World (Haus der Kulturen der Welt) under the title ‘Animism’. Scholars endeavoured suggesting the hypothesis, whether modernity is in fact turning to something “totalitarian” and thus on “the best way” to become “stiff” as an “academic doctrine”. “The question what is alive and what is not, is therefore central because we reason on a series of basic considerations, which are controlling the western thinking for centuries”, reports Felix

⁶⁶ There are currently several scholars, discussing the possibility whether we have already entered a kind of a „post postmodern“ era (cf. Alan Kirby, *The Death of the Postmodern*, in *Philosophy now*, retrieved on October the 7th, 2010, <http://www.philosophynow.org/issue58/58kirby.htm>). Among others Hans Joas, who notices from the scope of religious sciences that i) ever since the 2001 Twin Tower tragedy in the US, and the discourse on terrorism, “Islam and the forms of Islam, came to the center of public debates”, bringing to the foreseen issues such as religion, “something” which “was thought to belong to the past”; ii) “ the integration of Muslim emigrants to Europe and the question as to the borders of the expansion of the European Union... sets new challenges for all historically created arrangements of Europe as concerns religion and state”; 3) Because of the above the constitution of Europe as concerns its religious identity comes to discussion anew and as such Joas states that “we should have the courage to speak of an end of the postmodern”. From: Hans Joas, *Gesellschaft, Staat und Religion*, in Hans Joas and Klaus Wiegandt (Hg.), *Säkularisierung und die Weltreligionen*. Frankfurt am Main: S. Fischer Verlag, 2007, pp. 10-12. Likewise, Alan Kirby also based on the idea that “postmodernism was buried in the rubble of the twin towers” (p. 226), goes on arguing on the “return of the poisonous grand narrative”, this time though not in the form of religion but in the form of consumerism, boldly defining the new era, named by the author as „digimodernism“. From: Alan Kirby, *Digimodernism: How new technologies dismantle the postmodern and reconfigure our culture*, NY: Continuum international publishing group, 2009, pp.238-241.

Stephan for the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. In a “euphoric atmosphere”, podiums discussions that took place, actually examined on the case whether “history, should be rewritten” all the way, beginning from modernity’s doctrines of the 17th century. In a courageous instance, it was even mentioned the very fact that the ‘primitive’, as a characteristic is in fact an invention of modernity itself, as a ‘moral’ excuse for legitimating its colonisation policies, as a label for anyone or anything that wouldn’t co-op with its ideas. Just like the historical fact that modernity chose which literature, alias which theory should express it the most and therefore left aside anything outside the circumference of its mottos and ideas. That is why “nowadays [we] do not read Descartes ‘De Homine’ rather only his ‘Meditations’ and seldom Kant’s nature philosophical writings rather only his ‘Critics’”⁶⁷. In other words: whether modernity chose for us, without us the way we should experience life.

A similar questioning however is also taking place at the moment within another context: that of the arts.

There has been over the last years a particularly bold illustration of the idea of ‘going back in order to find the lost link, where we abandoned our physicality’ among others in popular cinematography, specifically with 2012’s ‘The Artist’ by Michel Hazanavicius as well as Martin Scorsese’s ‘Hugo Gabret’⁶⁸, who surprised the worldwide audience and critics with a nostalgic tribute to the very beginnings of the cinematic art, implying their considerations on the functionality and thus the quality of the early cinema in comparison to our highly digitised possibilities. The first, a black and white, silent film telling the story of how the sound replaced the ‘good-old’ silent film culture of the 20’s, questioned whether the objective of the myth in cinema can be perhaps best achieved with a simplicity of technological means, which facilitate the transmission of a more anthropologically amended message. Likewise Scorsese shared his admiration to the early masters of the cinema, who managed back in those days to achieve much with limited means.

The list of paradigms within the world of the arts currently reflecting on the specific issue, is surprising large: for instance a further popular one, concerning a 23-year-old British girl, named Adele, who turned this year’s Grammy awards also to a series of surprises by winning 6 awards for just proudly bringing back to live a mixture of blues, jazz and soul. This girl is

⁶⁷ Felix Stephan, ‘Schläft ein Geist in allen Dingen’ in the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* Nr. 67, 20. März 2012, p. 11.

⁶⁸ ‘The Artist’ official website, retrieved on march the 28th, 2012, <http://weinsteinc.com/sites/the-artist/> and ‘Hugo Gabret-the Movie’, retrieved on March the 28th, 2012, <http://www.hugomovie.com/>

currently selling three times more than legendary Lady Gaga and her songs are stuck on the charts for several weeks, equalling the records of the 80's and 70's star singers⁶⁹.

A further example, this time from the serious contemporary dance scene, a young Forsythe Company graduate, Greek choreographer Yannis Mandafounis and his team MAMAZA, who in their last piece of work titled 'Cover up', premiered last year in Frankfurt am Main, gave a similar message to the public by indicating with a great portion of irony and good humour as well as with an extreme simplicity of means the limitations of technology, when it comes to the comparison to the multifaceted, creative human spirit⁷⁰.

Finally there is a courageous attempt by various serious contemporary composers to create sonic environments/ performances that re-employ the element of the ritual in contexts that exceed those of regular concerts. Attempts such as those of German composer Manos Tsangaris, an artist, who is very consciously elaborating the idea of integrating ritual habituations in the form of 'new music theatre', or of 'stationary new music theatre', in conjunction with media elements, achieve on bringing into discussion the problematic of our current situation as described above.

Indicatively in his 2010 installation opera *Batscheba: Eat the history!* he specifically brought the vanity of virtual communication (when it comes to issues that duel to bare physicality such as human love) into a superb artistic discourse. By positioning the work in five different performance spaces (even though on the same campus), the row of which, was to be decided by the public upon wish in 2 successive days, he managed to create an infinity of time and space not least a participatory thematic, where the public was able to interact by means of its individual presence. Lastly the integration of special sonorities within the piece, such as those of non-conventional instruments/ material have worked as signals which kept the audience attentive during the whole of the 5 performances ultimately unifying the whole project in one message, in one plot, or myth⁷¹. "This...piece transposes its *Doppelgänger* character constantly, and latently, at least, at the heart of the structure is pre-occupied with multiple

⁶⁹ Paul Gambaccini, How America fell for Adele, Retrieved on march the 22nd, 2012, <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/music/rockandpopfeatures/9072661/Grammy-awards-2012-How-America-fell-for-Adele.html>

⁷⁰ 'Mamaza, Cover-up', retrieved March the 28th, 2012, <http://mamaza.net/cover-up/>

⁷¹ 'Bilder einer Musikbaustelle', retrieved on March the 29th, 2012, [feed://www.swr.de/blog/donaueschingen/tag/tsangaris/feed/](http://www.swr.de/blog/donaueschingen/tag/tsangaris/feed/)

casting, a twin like construction of stage situations and spatial ones (and their own divisions too), but also with a ‘polyphonic’ arrangement of various art forms”⁷².

I believe it is equally the time for all ethnologists and specifically of ethnomusicologists to realise the time in which we are currently living in and take advantage of this nostalgia of the people towards the anthropological origins of culture. Following a critical period in the mid 2000’s where oral traditions were indeed an “endangered species” as the 2003 UNESCO convention on the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritage declares and despite the fact that my generation or even, the younger ones are loosing further contact to their local traditions due to the individualisation and the detachment from physical communal behaviour (something for which they are not to be blamed and accused of since they were nurtured with post modern ideals), the beginnings of the new decade indicate a unique window opening bright ajar:

I think it is the time for all ethnomusicologists as actual safe guarders of the musical oral traditions, to grasp the opportunity and find ways of approaching people, especially the young generations informing them that what they are subconsciously longing for is in fact to be traced within them, within a forgotten part/ archetype of them, within their selves and that everything else are just the tools towards: in other words, to educate them on recognising, distinguishing and lastly letting them the freedom to choose between authentic modes of human behaviour and their profit oriented artificial substitutes.

The first step to be done is the identification and definition of each tradition, depending on its locality. Therefore I sincerely and warmly support the 2003 UNESCO convention on the safeguarding of the intangible cultural heritages. I have recently come across the press release of the acknowledgment of the Cypriot *tsiatista* tradition to be guarded under the intangible heritage’s list⁷³. An excellent step to go; yet still many more to come. Then even though impossible to safeguard all aspects of a regional *modus Vivendi*, we ought to set the most crucial perspectives into discussion. The Articles nr. 11-14 of the convention call on excellent ideas as to the how-to, suggesting likewise “identification and “definition”⁷⁴ as the first step

⁷² Armin Köhler, ‘Batsheba. Eat the history!’, Donaueschinger Musiktage 2009, Vol. 3: Manos Tsangaris: Batsheba. Eat the history!, Baden Baden: SWR/ NEOS Music GmbH, 2010.

⁷³ ‘Unesco identifies endangered cultural traditions’, retrieved on December the 1st, 2011, <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2011/nov/29/unesco-endangered-cultural-traditions-heritage>

⁷⁴ Article 11/b; The Convention for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage by UNESCO, 17 October 2003, Paris; retrieved on December the 1st, 2011, <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00006>

and proceeding with the promotion and integration into planning programmes⁷⁵, the designation and establishing of “one or more competent bodies for the safeguarding”⁷⁶. Moreover it encourages the “fostering” and “strengthening of institutions for training in the management ...and the transmission of such heritage”⁷⁷, the establishment of “documentation institutions”⁷⁸, the launching of “training programmes within the communities and groups concerned”⁷⁹ even the “non-formal means of transmitting knowledge”⁸⁰. I believe this particular final clause should be given a particular importance. Then, it is the time, now more than ever to formally use technology for the sake of approaching/ contacting, informing and educating people.

Forums and discussion panels should be created online, well promoted and introduced within the broader educational programmes; programmes that would especially motivate the younger to come in contact, to get to know of these heritages, but most important though to participate, with each other in these online programmes; The use of social networks such as Facebook, to create forums, groups and thematic profiles should be of great benefit on behalf of a multimedia and multi-perspective learning process and should be regarded at this point in history, as an ideal tool towards. Moreover, SoundCloud profiles could be of particular interest, urging participants to take the responsibility of working with elements of their respective tradition. As such, competitions using these media could be announced, as well as workshops led by specialists both academics and experienced representatives of those traditions. During these kinds of workshops the opinion of the younger should be heard and acknowledged. Primarily however the main objective should be to offer the opportunity to the participants, to experience by themselves the beneficence of ritual practises in terms of physical reality. Furthermore ideas such as virtual museums, such as that of the virtual food museum recently launched on the web⁸¹, give an excellent idea, of how the approach could also look like. The integration of a discussion panel, along with its link to social networks such as Facebook, gives the opportunity to a broader public to come across it and reflect upon it.

⁷⁵ Ibid. Article 13a.

⁷⁶ Ibid. Art. 13b.

⁷⁷ Ibid. Art. 13d/i.

⁷⁸ Ibid. Art. 13d/iii.

⁷⁹ Ibid. Art. 14a/ii.

⁸⁰ Ibid. Art. 14a/iv.

⁸¹ ‘Cyprus food virtual museum’, retrieved March the 05th 2012, <http://foodmuseum.cs.ucy.ac.cy/web/guest/home>

This unique opportunity of creating bridges between generational and hence cultural gaps should be taken advantage of. Lets inform people on another possibility, which might indeed find tempting, at this particular time. Without wanting to sound eschatological I assure you, if we keep further theorising neglecting the reality being formed out there and transformed in front of our own eyes, the next generation, will certainly keep on theorising on oral traditions this time though, under the scope of archaeology. And to sum up with: taking the chance on fighting for saving intangible traditions is not a matter of Romanticism, as orthodox sceptics would ironically comment, indicating the technological plethora and its seeming omnipotence around us: it is firstly a matter of a tribute and a sign of respect to the people, who came before us but also a chance for us to confront ourselves and ask us in all sincerity: Can we keep on living alienated from who we really are? Can we further afford emotionally, physically and lately financially living the way we have lived all of these decades and centuries?

"Great things end; Small things endure. Society must become united again instead of so disjointed. Just look at nature and you'll see that life is simple. We must go back to where we were, to the point where we took the wrong turn. We must go back to the main foundations of life without dirtying the water."⁸²

⁸² Andrey Tarkovsky, *Domenico's speech*: Nostalghia, 1983.

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