

PHILOSOPHIE - « Philosophy &...Rhythm » : A session of the Annual Conference of The Society for European Philosophy - 1 September 2011 - York St John University, York, UK

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Philosophy &...Rhythm : [A session on Rhythm of the Annual Conference of The Society for European Philosophy](#) - 1 September 2011 - York St John University, York, UK.

Abstract : The analytical significance of the concept of rhythm to the study of culture and art has been recently recognized in a wide range of disciplines. To give a few examples, rhythm has become a pervasive concept in psychological studies into interpersonal experience and the emergence of selfhood (Daniel Stern, Arnold Modell), in anthropological approaches to the body and intercorporeality (Francois Laplantine), in continental philosophy's understanding of culture and technology (Gilles Deleuze & Félix Guattari, André Leroi-Gourhan), in dance studies' understanding of the body's kinetic potential (Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, Deirdre Sklar), and in new accounts of the affective powers of the sonic (Amy Herzog, Steve Goodman). In each of these areas, rhythm is considered to be a force of organization and differentiation that creates the heterogeneous differences, connections and transformations that make up existential and interpersonal events.

The purpose of this panel is to elaborate a philosophy of rhythm as an appropriate mode of analysis of these expressive events. Whether aesthetic, cultural, strategic, or other, we understand the event to be an instance of rhythmic time, summoning, expressing and animated by the abstract yet real (virtual) movements of matter. A rhythmic ontogenetics of this kind necessarily departs from a binary split between nature and culture, I and you, mind and body. Instead, the significance of rhythm for us lies in the ways it stresses the pre-reflexive dimensions of experience, uncovering sensations, impressions, affects and movements that we can barely perceive, that are fleeting and hard to express in language, yet vibrantly real in their effects. Through these explorations the individual papers of the panel map out the workings of rhythm as an interface between diverse elements (human, machine or other), forging links between the arts, media theory, ethnography, anthropology, neuroscience, psychoanalysis and contemporary philosophy. As a result, new, theoretically and politically productive interferences and syntheses are generated, opening the concept of rhythm onto a trans-disciplinary milieu.

Session Chair : Gary Peters

This session includes :

- **Eleni Ikoniadou : “Interrhythmicity and the Digital Art Event”**

Abstract : What more can we say about a work of art, in so far as it is not merely a cultural moment of experimentation by an artist-genius attempting to imitate or improve nature ? Even if we accept that a degree of intention and control enters the relationship between artist, art project and a body’s experience of it, how can we account for the spacetime that they produce without falling into clichés about the priority of either (space or time ; object or human perception etc.) ? For Deleuze & Guattari, perception does not belong to subject or object but rather resides “in the movement serving as the limit of that relation” (2002 : 282). Yet the movement is not purely spatiotemporal, actual and corporeal, but rather amodal, potential and somewhat nonsensory. If this virtual movement emerges in-between perceiver and perceived as a stream of ‘pure relations of speed and slowness’ detached from subject, structure and lived experience, then we can suggest that all the elements of the art assemblage (human, machine, or other) are tied together by a rhythmic tension.

This paper will approach the notion of rhythm as an elementary movement of matter, enabling relations between heterogeneous bodies and allowing unusual definitions of the digital art event. In particular, the essay argues that a rhythmic movement is found in digital projects that crisscross digital installation and performance art, as a ‘vibrating sensation’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1991) that encompasses and incorporates the event without necessarily actualizing it. Through a discussion of the notions of sensation, vibration, affect and feeling, across the work of Deleuze, Deleuze and Guattari, Susanne Langer and William James, this essay considers specific examples of digital art events as instances of contingency between artwork material, creative act, and artist as ‘seer’ or ‘becomer’. Ultimately, and this will be the aim of the paper, an investigation into installation/performance projects enables the articulation of an ‘interrhythmicity’ from within the assemblage ; a power or energy that no longer needs (external) support and which follows the stretching of experience beyond the scope of actuality.

- **Milla Tiainen : “The Voice as Transversal Rhythmics : Rethinking Vocalities in Contemporary Arts and Culture”**

Abstract : The voice has figured as a multifaceted problem in contemporary, especially deconstructionist and poststructuralist, philosophy, social theory, and the study of culture and arts. The issues examined in connection with voice have stretched from presence to subjectification and language, gender, sexuality, mediation and more. All these approaches have nevertheless pondered the peculiar relationship(s) of voice to the body and society. Often, they have inquired the very ways that the voice plays out at and occasionally challenges that intersection. Of keen importance here has been voice’s inherent traversing of conventionally, even foundationally, separate categories : its simultaneous unfolding within and attachment to inside and outside, signification and ‘pure’ sonority, bodily sensation and thought, subject and the other, biological matter and culturally embedded techniques.

Existing perspectives, from Jacques Derrida’s critique of phonocentrism to Adriana Cavarero’s political philosophy of vocality, have incisively attended to the workings of the voice at the above intersections or to its transversality. Yet this article claims that the idea of transversality would need to be pushed further and new conceptual tools developed to even more effectively address the entanglements of individual enunciating bodies and wider social realities, as well as the interactions

between various kinds of bodies, within events of vocal expression, transmission and reception. This holds particularly for the voice's modes of emergence and affective capacities in today's technological, hypermediated milieus of social existence and artistic activity. To this end, I propose a distinctly defined concept of rhythm that draws on the work of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, Elizabeth Grosz, Brian Massumi, Amy Herzog and others. Essentially, rhythm signals, in these frameworks, temporary groupings of heterogeneous material/sentient elements or agencies. It is what moves between the elements, coordinating their participation in shared events while not annihilating their mutual and internal divergences. This concept of rhythm is crucially useful when trying to rethink the voice beyond traditionally anthropocentric scenarios in terms of the current "enlarged ecologies" (Braidotti) of its becoming that contain a range of different, interacting components and 'bodies' from technical devices and environments, individual embodied agencies and emergent social collectives to (mediated) memories and multisensory impressions. I will mobilize the concept in relation to some examples from avant-garde vocal art and popular music/video art that point instructively to the broader sensual, social and political 'rhythmics' that the voice, in its contemporary incarnations, may be involved in and generate.

• **Pasi Väliaho :“ Rhythms of the Console Screen : Kill, Predict, Preempt”**

Abstract : A generic description of a couple of seconds of playing a first-person shooter such as Call of Duty : Black Ops on PlayStation®3 in one's living room might go as follows : "I crouch down and hide myself behind the wall, lean to my left to get a better view of the situation ; feeling a bullet hitting my shoulder unaware where it came from, I panic, jump up and start to fire." Television and computer screens have today become occupied by a multiplicity of pre-verbal visual-kinetic images that literally make us move by evoking fundamental feelings of arousal and kinaesthesia at the heart of self-experience. At the same time, these "sub-representational" images tap into the brain's plasticity to predict and adapt to new situations by producing what neuroscientists call fixed action patterns. This article develops the notions of rhythmic agency and gesture (from Latin *gerere*, to behave, to act) in light of these developments in contemporary visual culture. The purpose of this article is two-fold. First, drawing from neuroscience and psychology, it addresses the evocative power of the console screen to pattern motor actions and the proprioceptive organization of selfhood. Secondly, it discusses the mechanisms of repetition, reiteration and standardization of gestures that the console screen thus implements in plotting agency in the neoliberal era. In this context, the concept of rhythm will be used in critically analyzing how the screen apparatus captures the embodied agent into ever-expanding circuits of consumption and virtualized war. Furthermore, it will assist in conceptualizing the type of preemptive "onto-power" (Massumi) that can be seen as shaping screen subjectivities today.