

Beats and being

Towards a rhythm-oriented ontology

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This presentation has been performed in the conference "Performance Philosophy," University of Surrey, Guilford in 2013. In the [original](#), parts that are here in bold have been struck out by the author but unfortunately this website does not support strikethrough characters. We are sorry for the inconvenience.

Tic. Right now. Tac. Something irrups. At this moment. Something takes place. Something occupies the place. Something takes over the place. The place where things happen. The land of what happens. Something arises there. Something is brought about: a tic. Something unfolds. The tic. It unfolds for those who are in the place - in the land where things happen. From the point of view of those who are not in such a place, it doesn't unfold. It carries on well folded. One has to be in this place to see what is taking place. What is this land? Etienne Souriau had a name for it - one of his efforts to convey the idea of a *surexistence*, nothing above any existence, nothing shinier, nothing more sublime than any mode of existence, but where they all modes of existence meet. His name would be: *carrefour existentiel*. That is, a crossroad. The existential crossroad: something had to cross those roads in order to exist (in whatever form, mode, spice, texture that existence takes up). Only for those existing, for those in the *carrefour*, there is a difference between what could have happen and what ticked. Between what is virtual - and would take place only if all the other things that take place make room for it - and what is actual. The *carrefour* is a borderline. A fine line. Tiny. A tic. The line crossed by what steps into existence. Into the place of what exists. To be is to meet whatever else is. Existence is some sort of meeting. The crossroad is a meeting place. The *carrefour*. To exist is to go beyond the pale. It is set by a line only seen by whatever has crossed the line. If you're not in place, nothing takes place. Nothing ever ticks if you're not either before the tic or before the tac, after the tic or after the tac. There is no event, no happening, no arrival for those who are not in the platform.

An event has to precede the tic, tic and then go on and tac. Nothing ever happens in McTaggart's B-series. Time doesn't stand without a now. Now. Now. The A-series is what makes things happen because it sets the stage for the indexical, the positional, the dispositional. Position. Disposition. A disposition can only manifest by making something take place. If nothing is coming - like in a B-series, a handless clock - dispositions become irrelevant, they're all unmanifested. Finkish. Something that could happen but its time will never come - because without an A-series, time never comes. The A-series introduces tense into dates. It sets something moving because it produces a Doppler effect among what happens. I keep going and the sunset looms ahead, comes close, lies behind me. The beach stays put and the seagull arrives, lands and flies. Its landing was tics away - but the beach was ticking, it was there sitting in the *carrefour*. How could it have happened that having been once so far in advance they were now as much behind us? The *carrefour* is like the A-series: it is for those who are taking place. An A-series seen from outside is a B-series. It's only from the point of view of something inside that something else takes place.

A tic changes everything – in which tic are you? In which tac? The A-series introduces tense. McTaggart despaired of the reality of time because time makes things less absolute, less coherent or less neutral. One has to be in a tac in particular, things look different in different tics, and it does matter after which tac you are. In which tic, in which tac? Tense. Tension. Extensive. Intensive. Tense. In order to come to the *carrefour* of existences, something has to be in a present that becomes past after being in the future. It has to happen. Events carry whatever is carried through the fine line towards the *carrefour*. There is a tectonics under the *carrefour*. Things that urge to take place. Things that are about to take place. Things that could take place if only something else triggers. Potentialities. Dispositions. This is the lesson Deleuze draws from Leibniz in his *Le Pli*: a predicate is an event. In Leibniz, it is the instructions for an event: to be Adam in this world is to sin – among other things. Predicates are dispositional in this sense: they carry an event that passes. Predicates host events – apple is ripe so it has gone through a process of growth, sky is bright so I know the sun has risen, clock is working so it has been manufactured. If it is so, even predicates that seem categorical such as solidity or extension host tics and tacs. In fact, tics and tacs are themselves carriers of events – the tic that has passed, the tac that is about to pass. **Now, if this is so, if predicates are events, and if events pass only through an (indexical) A-series of past, present and future, predicates are always indexical. They are *de re*. Perry has famously insinuated that indexicality is all spread albeit implicit. Predicates, rather than pointing at properties, are pointing at relations brought about by events. They involve an unfolding. Something is solid because something happened to that effect. Predicates condensate events. Green. Presented as green. Grue. Presented as grue. Green and grue carry different unfoldings. Different things are about to happen – or fail to happen. To predicate is to talk about events. What connects to a tic past, what projects to a tac to come. Encapsulated rhythms.**

To take place, anything has to meet whatever else is taking place. Something takes place today. The farmer came to feed the chicken. The sun rose. The water boiled. What would unfold next? In order for anything to happen next, a tic has to happen next. That is, something has to happen next. I can doubt the sun to rise tomorrow but only if I don't doubt that there is something to tic and usher in tomorrow. Deleuze calls the past *repetition* – repetition but also rehearsal –, the present the repeater and the future the repeated. The calendar. The rhythm of the stars. They will tic. In order for something to come to the *carrefour*, at least something else has to come to the *carrefour*. Something has to be repeated – to lie out the future – in order for something else to be expected, or not expected. To conceive of the future is to conceive of a tic – to conceive of something that will repeat. Blanchot writes, in the *Écriture du Désastre*: *Nous sommes au bord du désastre sans que nous puissions le situer dans l'avenir*. (We are at the brink of a disaster but we cannot place it in the future.) The unpredictable is not placed in the future. The next tic. When will it come? Something has to tic the tic. Something has to clock the clock. The *carrefour* is always populated. **Out of nothing, nothing takes place. But I'll be back to nothingness. And I'll be back to silence. Something has to pave the way for whatever else will happen. There should be future for the future tic to tic.** There is no ur-clock that would prepare a future for every tic and every tac. Because such an independent ur-clock would have no tense – no present, no now for anything, no A-series. Those ur-tics would have nothing to pass through. To exist, in a *carrefour*, is to co-exist.

A tic is brought about. Leibniz was firmly stepping in rhythmic territories. He put together the idea of predicate as event and the idea of co-possibility. Things exist in a world. They exist if they co-exist. Yet, he thought things had to be prepared to come to a world. He imagined something like a scored concerto. A score. Still, he opened the way for thinking the world in terms of rhythms. The irruption of things in a *carrefour* of existences has an acoustic element to it. The noise of things

happening. To come about. A beat. Sonic. A sonic ontology. An ontology of noise and beats instead of images and landscapes. A *rhythm-oriented ontology*. To be is to beat. This is not a stethoscope. This is a tool for ontography. An ontoscope. Rhythms. Rhythms. Rhythms. Rhythm is intense: it infects. Rhythm impregnates other rhythms. A ROO is not about distinctness, it is a social ontology – social in the sense of Tarde: in the sense of things that act collectively by following what is around them. By depending on what is around. When sociality is high, each thing repeat the things they find around them – like molecules or colonies of bacteria. Like cellular automata. In the general case, different things repeat each other, but the repetition is what Deleuze has called dressed repetition. Not naked. Something is entrained by the beats heard but entrainment is mediated by one's folds. I move my leg to the music, but to the limit of the my muscles, of the articulation of my bones, of my folds. Entrainment. Drifted repetition. The flower parodies the sun, the insect parodies the flower, the eyes parody the wings. Recapitulation. Folds copy folds. Beats copy beats. In their own rhythm. Delanda talks about intensive time – time capable to contaminate. Spreading rhythms takes place in inorganic phenomena as well as in animal life, for instance in menstrual cycles of humans. One woman on the pill entrains the period of a bunch around her. Entrainment. If intensity is the capacity to infect what is around, rhythms carry a rate of intensity. Beat. Being. Entrainment is dressed repetition: sensitive to embodiment. All rhythm is modulated by embodiment – by the folds, by how can I bend my feet to tap. I tap my foot to the rhythm I capture, to the rhythm to which my folds can be entrained. But by doing that I come up with another rhythm, a rhythm that also entrains around it. The rhythm of things taking place is itself entrained by whatever else is in the *carrefour* of existences. **Being is about beating. Beating is about composing something with whatever else is happening. Because events are what take place, they come with a pulse, and because of that they are entrainable. Coming to the *carrefour* is coming to a society of existents where each thing responds with its folds to the others. Everything modulates everything else. Capture. A society of antennas. Some beats are not heard, they stay in silence, like the beats of my tapping that differ from yours when we seem entrained. These beats - in silence - are like Whitehead's extensive continuum, they are there but not heard, not yet captured, they are perceived in a daze, the daze of silence. White blindness. White deafness: silence.**

Induction itself is a form of entrainment. We can only think about the whereabouts of the sun tomorrow if we have a sense of rhythm - enough of a sense of rhythm to be sure when tomorrow is. The next tic. The future makes sense only if there is a clock, a cycle or an expected rhythm we're tied to: the repeated. Habit-making is entrainment and production of further cycles. To learn to follow a rule (say, +2) is to be entrained by a rhythm. To incorporate in the concert of rhythms of one's body another rhythm. To learn a public language: to be entrained using all the resources one has. The resources are private: my folds, my curves, the rhythm of my metabolism, the rhythm of my breathing, the rhythm of my tongue. Language is public, accent is private. To learn to follow a rule cannot be done if we cannot associate the rhythm to be learned to others that are already available to us. This is entraining. There should be something in the pupil that prepares him to the learning – and I guess this has to do with the cycles the pupil embodies. **The 996-998-1000-1004 pupil of section 185 of Wittgenstein's *Investigations* captures the wrong rhythm - the rhythm is not entrained to the satisfaction of the tutor. Nothing else can be done but to repeat the entrainment having in mind that the pupil's receptors could be resistant to some rhythm. Concept-acquisition, and rule-following, is a way to explore important features of the rhythm of the world (of the many real patterns to be explored by different devices of capture). Folds and rhythms. Associated to differences. There are patterns that can be fully incorporated in the existing rhythms and the patterns that cannot be introduced to the combination of rhythms without getting dissolved into something else. This is why the pupil says 1004 after 1000. Resilient. His rhythms cannot incorporate +2 as we understand**

it. Folds and existing rhythms are devices of modulation. Modulation is sensitivity to some rhythms, not to all - nothing is sensitive to silence, to white deafness, to the extended continuum. Capture without modulation is blind. Embodiment. One's body provides what can be captured because a body is a modulation. It is a musical instrument. A drum. A metronome. The rhythm of what can take place.

A rhythm-oriented ontology is an ontology of pulses and folds. Space and time are traces of the beats of the events. Not an ontology of objects or properties but an ontology of folds in space and time: differentials that appear when they are requested. One never knows what a body can do - what it can dance, to what it can be entrained. A different rhythm uncovers unsuspected folds, unsuspected capacities to bend. These differentials, pulses and folds, go on indefinitely. A fold is made of folds. The silence between two beats is measured by beats that cannot be heard. Silence has the daze of the extensive continuum. Rhythms are made of rhythms that live in each beat. Rhythms carry further rhythms and there is no end to rhythm. **Between each tic and a tac there are tics and tacs - the clock of the stars have a tic filled with loads of tics of the clock of the insect. This is the very nature of *chronos* - the present time. The present time for my body contains instants of my digestion, of my metabolism, of the migrating populations that I host, of the dynamics of my fluids. Rhythms. Rhythm is fluid. The even is a flow. Flows of flows. Every beat is made out of rhythm. The distinction between a beat and a full rhythm is in a question of capture. Capture itself has a rhythm. The beats that make a beat are in the ears of the beholder - the one that can capture it. The *carrefour* is heard - better, it is about capture. Capture is about rhythm.**

Differences in capture: modulation. [But] Modulation is embodiment. The rhythms that can be captured by entrainment are the rhythms that fit in the folds - one needs to have a finger available to tap on a table. I cannot tap it, it's too fast. I cannot dance to the rhythm of millennia passing. In a rhythm-oriented ontology, compositions are produced by entrainment. Each thing filters the rhythm around it - in fact, it composes by modulating. In a world of rhythms and capture, there is a general version of Kant's formula that intuitions without concepts are blind: signals without modulations are blind. Modulation is about hearing: without it, the white deafness of too much noise that cannot be heard. Folds modulate. They enable the capturing device to be sensible to some beats. Modulation is about producing a matrix of differences and indifferences and a capacity to repeat without much interference - the naked repetition under which there is always a dressed repetition. Modulation through embodiment enables us to distinguish the joints of things. They are, so to speak, more evident than unities, individuation, wholes or parts. **We see the joints - and only some of them. In a rhythm-oriented ontology, the borders are prior to the countries. Countries are hostages to their borders. The tic precedes the second, the minute, the hour, the day. ROO has an injunction to whatever exist: tic to the tics you hear, tac to the tacs you hear. With the folds you find.** Everything appears to all others as a metronome. A *carrefour*. But metronomes that could go astray. **They are not immune to the rhythms - they are commune to them (munis, munis, says Esposito: to do a service). Metronomes that affect each other. Heterochrony. When a fold comes up in the *carrefour*, it is in the open - open to be entrained by whatever else beats there. Contingency. A fold is always up for grabs. My folds relies on the folds of the surface of the floor, all floor rely on the tectonics of the ground but each fold makes a difference. Reduction and irreduction is a matter of folds - to reduce (or to refuse to reduce) something to something else is to fold it up (or not) in a specific way. To make something out of something else one folds around.** I rely on the rhythms of my breathing, my metabolism, my locomotion just as the sunflower relies on the rhythm of the sun. Myself, an individual objects only to the extent as it couples the different rhythms. A coupling: a

concerto. Or rather, a jam session that hasn't yet reach its end.

Its end. Some last tics and tacs. Rhythm is connected to flows. Flows that speed up, flows that keep their pace. The flow of events. Accelerations. Now, what about nothingness? The negative is a rhythm. A complete other rhythm but also the absence of tic that precedes the tac. Surely, nothingness cannot be noticed if there is no clock. If there is no metronome. Nothing precedes the metronome. Nothing sets the stage for the *carrefour* before the roads start crossing. There is no *carrefour* before the *carrefour* – the rest is silence.