

Rhythmanalysis in Gymnastics and Dance : Rudolf Bode and Rudolf Laban

lundi 2 septembre 2019

This text has been published for the first time in Body & Society, Sage, 2014, vol. 20, pp. 30-50. It is now online on [Academia.edu](https://www.academia.edu). We are grateful to [Paola Crespi](#) for the permission to republish it here.

Abstract : The translation of Rudolf Bode's [Rhythm and its Importance for Education](#) and Rudolf Laban's '[Eurhythm and kakorhythm in art and education](#)' aims at unearthing rhythm-related discourses in the Germany of the 1920s. If for most of the Englishspeaking world the translation of Henri Lefebvre's *Rhythmanalysis : Space, Time and Everyday Life* marks the moment in which rhythm descends into the theoretical arena, these texts, seen in their connection with other sources, express, instead, the degree to which rhythm was omnipresent in philosophical, artistic, socioeconomical and psychological discourses at the turn of the 20th century. Some commentators, such as Lubkoll, have recently highlighted the centrality of rhythm in Modernity, lamenting a lack of scholarship focusing on this phenomenon. This is arguably due to a lack of access to sources accentuated by the language barrier ; if, indeed, the 'rhythmanalysis' of the turn of the century is not an exclusively Teutonic phenomenon, it is also true that a copious amount of material on rhythm of this period is written in German and remains untranslated. In this sense, then, this translation aims at contributing to the project of a cultural history of rhythm.

Keywords : 1920, body, cultural history, dance, Germany, gymnastics



The translation of Rudolf Bode's *Rhythm and its Importance for Education* (1920) and Rudolf Laban's 'Eurhythm and kakorhythm in art and education' (1921) aims at unearthing rhythm-related discourses in the Germany of the 1920s. Bode and Laban were renowned exponents of German body-culture (*Koerperkultur*) and German expressionist dance (*Ausdrucktanz*), respectively, and they influenced in far-reaching ways subsequent developments in these fields. The texts here translated show how rhythm was central to their philosophies and their practices and also, more generally, to discourses evolving around new conceptions of education, aesthetics, psychology and economics in Germany before and during the advent of National Socialism. As is evident in the texts, rhythm was, however, far from being a clear-cut concept or phenomenon. Indeed, Bode and Laban differ in their definition of rhythm - the former stressing its irrational, undivided nature, the latter its polyrhythmic and polymorphous one. However, they both see it primarily as a corporeal, material

phenomenon,
something that positions them in line with later (Lefebvre, 2004) and contemporary (Hamilton, 2007 ; Henriques, 2010) bodily approaches to rhythm. [...]