



# **Peter CHEYNE, Andy HAMILTON, Max PADDISON (eds.), *The Philosophy of Rhythm : Aesthetics, Music, Poetics***

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**Abstract :** The review provides an outline of the collective monograph *The Philosophy of Rhythm : Aesthetics, Music, Poetics*, edited by Peter Cheyne, Andy Hamilton and Max Paddison, published by Oxford University Press, 2019. Concept of rhythm is analysed from different perspectives—philosophical, musicological and psychological. It considers a multidisciplinary approach and also includes both analytic and continental philosophical traditions. Rhythm is viewed as a pulse that is going through various metric structures including particular pieces of music, paintings, examples of poetry and philosophy. Twenty eight authors from the entire world discuss rhythm and specify definitions of rhythm. They try to give answers on crucial questions uniting experienced rhythm in philosophy and arts, thus giving an important contribution to rhythm studies. The book is organised thematically and based on different aspects of rhythm manifestations. The main questions of the research are as follows : How is rhythm experienced ? Does rhythm necessarily involve movement ? Why rhythm is so deeply rooted in human ? How can static configurations be rhythmic ? How does a rhythmic structure change from a stable pattern to a

flexible texture ? All these questions concern two interwoven issues common for the volume in general : immanence of rhythm to arts and human experience of it.

**Keywords :** rhythm, movement, time, space, art, philosophy, multidisciplinary, aesthetics, experience.

## 1. Introduction

The collective monograph *The Philosophy of Rhythm : Aesthetics, Music, Poetics* concerns different philosophical approaches and includes both continental and analytic traditions. The current review does not analyse all its chapters in detail but focuses more on the phenomenological point of view. The review is structured as follows : it gives a brief introduction on the concept of rhythm in philosophy ; marks out the contribution of the current volume ; provides an outline on the content of its parts and concludes on the importance of research of rhythm in interdisciplinary philosophy.

Studies of rhythm relate to different spheres, but simultaneously they form a complex application of appropriate and encompassing philosophical technique. Theoretical approach to rhythm transforms and changes together with the conceptual ambitions ; therefore, they broaden the scope of the concept's definition in correspondence with the explored philosophical stances. Multidisciplinary approach deepens understanding of rhythm and shows the role of rhythm in the world around us, it gives new opportunities for philosophical reflections and makes human activities clearer. In general, rhythm donates to metre, sequence, repetition, order, measured time and space, thus showing quantitative assessments. Differently from mathematically measurable world philosophy views immanence of rhythm and opens the deepest levels of human constitution.

In the history of philosophy, the rhythm research is characterised by fluctuations, it intensifies periodically, but then subsides again [1]. In recent decades rhythm research has been activated, and several volumes, dedicated to rhythmology, have been written. French philosopher Pascal Michon [2] has created an interdisciplinary research network : RHUTHMOS that could be considered as one of the most effective contributions to contemporary rhythm studies.

Rhythm studies related to phenomenology have not yet been widely developed, except for some doctoral thesis on phenomenology of rhythm [3] and some recent investigations in phenomenology of rhythm [4]. The reason of it may be in the fact that Husserl does not write about rhythm directly. However, phenomenology gives an impulse for various interpretations of rhythm : rhythms of intersubjective communication ; flux of internal time, time-objects ; rhythms of internal constitution of man and rhythms of surrounding worlds ; bodily and sensory perception of rhythm, etc. Phenomenology of rhythm is based on direct experience therefore giving feasibility for analyses of how rhythm is given, how its meanings are constituted and how rhythm differs from other meaningful phenomena. The contribution of Anna Yampolskaja [5] could be mentioned there. Analysing Henri Maldiney's [6] views on aesthetical experience, she concerns the concept of rhythm and binds it with sensory perception that gives access to the world as a whole and also shows sensing as a holistic level of intersubjective communication.

## 2. Outline of chapters

The multidisciplinary research *Philosophy of Rhythm : Aesthetics, Music, Poetics* is dedicated to

various kinds of arts and views them in perspective of rhythm concept binding it with such notions as experienced time, space, sensations and body. The volume editors : Peter Cheyne [7], Andrey Hamilton [8] and Max Paddison [9] stimulate a multidisciplinary examination of particular manifestations of rhythm and focus on rhythm in its relationship between everyday embodied experience, on the one hand, and the specific experience of music, dance, and poetry, on the other hand. Therefore, the main direction of the content of the volume is formed by binding internal rhythm of artworks with human experience. The volume is composed of five sections written by twenty eight researchers around the world from universities of various philosophical traditions : University of Dayton, Durham University, University of Leeds, University of Oxford, Harvard University, University of Sydney, University of London, Trinity College Dublin, University of Liverpool, Lancaster University, Uppsala University, Ohio State University, etc.

The introductory part *Dialogue on Rhythm* shows that philosophical knowledge is always dialogical where not one view prevails. Debate between five *Dramatis Personae* (Skepticus, Dynamicus, Metaphysicus, Analyticus, Vitalia) is left open : rhythm is characterized exploring different philosophical approaches and viewed as an order within a human body, an intentional phenomenon, a movement-in-time, a movement-in-space, etc. At the beginning of the dialogue the discussion turns to the notion of intentionality :

Musical rhythm is intentional and apparently meaningful. But it seems obvious to me that there are non-intentional meaningless rhythms, such as a train running on a track, a heartbeat, or the drip of a leaky tap. We might call these natural rhythms and distinguish them from human rhythms like music and dance, without denying that making rhythms is natural to us. (Hamilton, 2019, 17)

In any case, rhythm is viewed as a movement of different dispositions and capacities. The conversation between *Dramatis Personae* tries to give clear meanings of used terms—in a Socratic way they maintain a dynamic dialogue trying to find the most apprehensive and precise definitions. They discuss proto-rhythm, movement in music, meaningful order, entrainment, rhythm as the order of movement, human movement, etc., thus accentuating problems going through the following parts and chapters of the book.

The first section of the volume *Movement and Stasis* shows how rhythm is experienced through senses—experience of rhythm is also an experience of movement, and entity on which rhythm is founded form relationships with rhythm itself. The second section *Emotion and Expression* considers a relational perception of rhythm and views the inner constitution of human rhythm and its empathic relations to both—classical as well as popular music. The third section *Entrainment and the Social Dimension* covers such questions as social origin of rhythm and a neuro-psychological approach to rhythm. The latest part of the volume *Reading Rhythm* focuses on literature. Comparing rhythm in different forms of literature it is seen how important the domain of rhythm remains in metrical imagination of the reader even in reading of abstract poetry.

The fourth part *Time and Experience : Subjective and Objective Rhythm* binds rhythm with concepts of experience of time and space, music, graphic arts, body and movement. This part of the volume concerns phenomenology directly ; therefore some chapters need a more detailed analysis. In chapter *Time, Rhythm and Subjectivity. The Aesthetics of Duration* Max Paddison analyses how

experience of duration transforms in music, dance, literature, how rhythm is considered and how temporality is experienced within pattern of “rhythmicized duration.” Paddison bases on different philosophical interpretations of time : Newton’s conception of absolute and mathematical time without relation to anything external. Bergson’s duration as not measurable flux of experience. Kant’s “insistence that time is not an attribute of the object but is something brought to it by the experiencing subject” (Paddison, 2019, 275). Husserl’s conception of “flow” of time as a continuum uniting lived experience and temporal arts. Paddison turns to Bachelard’s [10] dialectical phenomenology as a particular relevance to the temporal arts as well as to Deliege’s [11] philosophy of experience of time as “dependent on the objects and events that occupy our consciousness.” (Paddison, 2019, 287). Paddison explores examples from Messianen’s definition of rhythm as “the ordering of movement” that open rhythmical movements also in spatial continuum. In conclusion he binds rhythm with the hermeneutical and historical approach :

I have argued that rhythm needs to be understood not simply as an independent parameter but as a fundamentally structural dimension of the temporal arts. [...] I have also made the claim that our ideas of rhythm, seen in this larger context, are historical and metaphorical in character. (Paddison, 2019, 289)

The chapter, written by Salomé Jacob [12], *Husserl’s Model of Time-Consciousness, and the Phenomenology of Rhythm*, examines a model of temporal consciousness of the experience of musical rhythm. She focuses on the question : How is it that one can-not think about rhythm in isolation from the temporal experience of it ? In accordance with Husserl’s stances, rhythm is viewed as experienced in living present including flux of three phases : the retention, the primal impression and the protention, thus opening the rhythm of phenomenological time (Husserl, 1991). Exploring Husserl’s well-known example of listening to melody, it is shown as a continuum of perception in listener’s apprehension of temporal relations at each moment. “Husserl’s purpose is thus two-fold : to account for the experience of temporally extended objects and also to account for the experience of one’s ongoing stream of experiences” (Jacob, 2019, 298). In experience of rhythm and melody a double intentionality synchronizes with pre-reflective level of bodily perception and a tacit sense of selfhood. Bodily move-ments are spatial and temporal :

Admittedly, Husserl’s analysis of time cannot do all of the work. [...] Bodily movements follow the expected sonic event and variations in the musical rhythm entail an implicit re-evaluation of the bodily movements. This highlights the particularly rich and com-plex phenomenology of rhythm, in which temporality interacts with the body. (Jacob, 2019, 305)

Jason Gaiger [13] in chapter *Pictorial Experience and the Perception of Rhythm* gives a view on how a painting may have a rhythm. He compares rhythmic temporal patterns of sounds with rhythmic spatial patterns of colours : “However, since reference to time is *definitional* for the concept of rhythm as it is employed elsewhere, we risk losing our grip on the meaning of the term if we apply it to spatial phenomena without any temporal reference” (Gaiger, 2019, 311). For argumentation of spatial rhythm in graphic arts Gaiger explores examples of art history—paintings of Wassily Kandinsky, Sonia Delaunay [14], Raphael, and connects them with the vision research, that is : a process of viewer’s observation of artwork, a determinate sequence of viewing, eye-tracking studies, etc. Gaiger unites the pictorial structure and the perception of it by temporal experience, thus showing an aspect of methodological approach to rhythm studies—based on bilateral relations

between work of art and human experience of it.

### **3. Conclusion**

Binding theoretical approaches with practices, transformative and fluid processes with concrete patterns of rhythm, it is seen that two interwoven notions are common for all parts and chapters of the volume : rhythm immanence to art, on the one hand, and its temporal and spatial experience, on the other hand. The greatest contribution of the volume is its multidisciplinary approach—it unites philosophers, psychologists, musicians, literary theorists for opening of plural perspectives of rhythm research, and shows that the borders of philosophical studies should be revised and new areas for philosophical reflections about reality should be found.

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## Notes

[1] The notion of rhythm is known from Ancient times. At the beginning, it was used as a technical term characterised by such sub-concepts as measure, number, periodicity. Ancient philosophers highlighted the main directions of philosophy of rhythm : the order of a sequence of time ; temporary disposition of something flowing ; a form that was itself changing during its manifestations ; harmony and disharmony of internal and outer rhythms ; rhythm of music and speech ; rhythm of body and soul. In Ancient philosophy rhythm is mentioned as something flowing and changing (Heraclitus). Rhythm was viewed in relations with physical objects (Democritus) that gives impulse for philosophy of nature developed by Diderot and Goethe, later by Nietzsche, then Deleuze. Pythagoras and Platonic paradigm views rhythm in mathematical and universal aspect-rhythmic sequence of time-length is organised by number. Aristotle develops a poetic aspect of rhythm and gives impulse for rhythm analysis in mimetic structures (Kivle, 2020). From the middle of 18th century, the concept of rhythm embraces philosophy, theory, medicine, art, language, natural sciences, linking rhythm to mathematical and numerical relationships, comparing music with rhythm in nature. Rhythm was shown to be documentable, visually depictable, and employable in identifying and developing processes by creating technological tools that show rhythms of mind-body interactions. The several devices have been invented : Carl Ludwig's kymograph (1846), for measuring of variation of blood pressure ; Édouard-Léon Scott de Martinville's phonograph (1857) ; Helmholtz' myograph (1850) for muscle twitches.

[2] Pascal Michon—PhD , works at Éducation Nationale in Paris. He does research in Cultural History, Ethics, Aesthetics and Metaphysics, Conceptual History of Rhythm.

[3] Two dissertations are published in data base *Proquest Dissertation Publishing* (Al-Saji, 2002 ; Verhage, 2008).

[4] See (Yampolskaja, 2018 ; Küle, 2011 ; Küle, 2002 ; Wiscus, 2015).

[5] Anna Yampolskaja — DSc in Philosophy, Leading Research Fellow at National Research University "Higher School of Economics" in Moscow.

[6] Henri Maldiney (1912-2013) — the French phenomenologist, devoted his works to art and mad-ness, and devised a phenomenology of feeling.

[7] Peter Cheyne — Associate Professor at Shimane University, and Visiting Fellow in Philosophy at Durham University. He leads two international projects, one on the Aesthetics of Perfection and Imperfection, and the other on the 17th- to 19th-century Philosophy of the Life Sciences.

[8] Andy Hamilton — Professor of philosophy at Durham University, UK. He specialises in aesthetics, philosophy of mind, political philosophy, and history of 19th- and 20th-century philosophy, especially Wittgenstein.

[9] Max Paddison — Emeritus Professor of Music Aesthetics at the University of Durham. He works in critical theory, philosophy, contemporary music and popular music.

[10] Gaston Bachelard (1884-1962) — French philosopher, the author of *Dialectic of Duration* (2000), *The Poetics of Space* (1957)

[11] Célestin Deliège (1922-2010) was a professor of musicology at *Le Conservatoire royal de Liège* in Belgium.

[12] Salomé Jacob — PhD, Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Durham.

[13] Jason Gaiger — Professor of Contemporary Art History and Theory at the Ruskin school of Art.

[14] Sonia Delaunay (1885-1979) — French artist, the first living female artist to have a retrospective exhibition at the Louvre in 1964.