



A topical analysis of rhythm (in time) will give us the void and a series of events.



Before making a structure

by means of rhythm,

it is necessary to decide

what rhythm is.

Cage

Rhythm itself is an unclear and vague concept,
being variously applicable to a multitude of situations,
arising in relation to music,
to language,
to meter,
and to rhyme.

Rhythm is primarily linked to time
and to duration,
to order and to flow,
through adjustments in frequency and in speed.

Pitch shifts and tempo accelerations,
directional pivots and motor impulses,
issues of focus and motivational fluctuations,
internal timing and infinite counting,
all contribute to our experience of rhythm,
and of thinking as rhythm.

Implicitly sonic in its modes of elaboration,
and in its methods of dissemination,
rhythm is present in relation to the body,
both internally and externally,
both regularly and irregularly:
circadian, circulatory, cardiac, respiratory,
schematic, seasonal, syncopated, mathematical,
musical, tidal, gravitational, spatial.

Rhythm in itself is inherently temporal,
being primarily conveyed experientially,
in terms of duration
or durations.

Rhythm when viewed in relationship to time,
denotes the frequency between occurrences.

In order to denote a frequency shift,
we must have a series of occurrences that is acted upon,
when frequency itself denotes the number of occurrences
of a repeating event per unit of time.

When viewing rhythm in relationship to time,
I am speaking in terms of temporal frequency,
but we can also think in terms of spatial or angular frequency,
to denote the rhythmic in relationship to space and movement.

But even when thinking of rhythm in space,
or of rhythm in movement,
we will still come back to relating the experience,
in terms of rhythm in relationship to time,
due to rhythm's fundamental bond to temporality,
in occurrence to occurrence,
and in event to event.

*Rhythm in the structural instance is relationship of lengths of time.
In the case of a year, rhythmic structure is a matter of seasons,
months, weeks and days.*

Cage

*Other time lengths such as that taken by a fire or the playing of a piece of music
occur accidentally or freely without explicit recognition of an all-embracing order,
but nevertheless necessarily within that order.*



A topical analysis of rhythm (in time) will give us the void and a series of events.



In *The Rhythmic Event*, Eleni Ikoniadou introduces the concept of rhythm
as detached from linearity and constant progression.

Instead she presents rhythm as a confluence of encounters between space, time and the body,
affective elements that are irreducible to units and hierarchies.

*A theory of rhythm as the force of the middle breaks with the mathematization of time
and its positioning according to units, measurements, and clocks.
Rhythm then may be thought of as a tremulous undulation
and one that does not actually pass or proceed in regular movement.*

Ikoniadou

Against the mathematisation of time,
she introduces rhythm as a bodily,
sonorous, relational concept.
One that can be felt and followed,
freed and focused.

She reminds us that we must start from the middle,
as rhythm is a property of this middle —
existing between events,
existing in time.

Describing 'the event' as a nexus of vibrations,
submerged in unpredictable dynamism
that is vital to the transmutational fabric of lived experience,
rhythm is interpreted in terms of the relational experience between events.

Rhythm is proposed as belonging to the void,
a linking property that relates events to one another,
as there is no clear dividing line between events,
but rather undulations and flows,
cadences and shifts.

*Considered rhythmically, there is no distance between two or more events;
instead there is only the "building up of potential"
swelling the gap between them and turning it into resonance.
The concept of rhythm belongs to the middle,
unleashing the relational potentialities of the notion of the gap
and mocking the idea of distance as a void.*

Ikonidou

With rhythm, the course of time gets twisted —
space, interaction, frequency and duration
all play a part in the rhythmic experience

Rhythm, property of the void.
Rhythm, the relational quality.
Rhythm, the framing experience.
Rhythm, a force that is enacted.
Rhythm, a guiding principle.

The rhythm of the void,
the void between events.

The relationship between the void and the event,
(one that is subjected to the fluctuations of rhythm)
constitutes a wavering and unstable temporal experience,
against the idea of a regulated and demarcated time
that is linked to the routine clock of industrialisation.

*Maybe the only thing that hints at a sense of Time is rhythm;
not the recurrent beats of the rhythm
but the gap between two such beats,
the grey gap between black beats:
the Tender Interval.*

Nabokov

*The regular throb itself merely brings back
the miserable idea of measurement,
but in between,
something like true Time lurks.*

The rhythmic experience is a tender, organic, rhizomatic linkage, one that can be contrasted against the harsh binaries, of a mathematised digital existence.

The rhythmic experience is unclear, is fluctuating, as variable as the texture of lived experience.

In the rhythmic experience, time becomes elastic and irregular, relational and irrational, subjective and experiential.

There are no clear cut instances—the grey zone rules supreme over much of everything.

The rhythmic experience takes into account the elasticity of temporal perception: Sundays pass at a different pace to Wednesdays, and minutes in meditation are infinitely more vast than those spent in departure lounges or in an evening in books or in a morning at work.

Each instance runs at a different tempo and frequency and is composed of different measures of duration.

These frequencies and measures of duration, can differentiate between the calm and the chaotic, between the ecstatic and the miserable.



A topical analysis of rhythm (in chaos) will give us the void and a series of events.



In *Breathing: Chaos and Poetry* Franco Berardi applies the following definition:

*Rhythm means chaotic singularisation of time:
rhythm scans time as the vibration of a singular breathing organism
which is seeking to tune in to its surrounding chaos.*

Berardi

Berardi proposes a collective consciousness, held together by rhythm and vibration through respiration, which grants the social body the ability to decide between undecidable alternatives using the language of nuance and suggestion.

These languages create space for poetic experiences of syntony and conjunction to counter the binary language of code and finance.

*Time is captured by a certain rhythmic refrain, so people march at the same pace.
This shared pace of time's temporality, perception, and projection is called "history".
Only thanks to the harmonisation of different temporalities
can history frame time's myriad events within a common projectual narrative structure.*

Berardi

When working with chaosmic conjunctive events of synchronisation through a rhythmic refrain sung by a polyphony of voices, the collective social body can elaborate new poetic experiences which can lead to the discovery of new continents of meaning, containing imaginations and possibilities to project speculative narrative structures and to build bridges over the void; the void that separates conscious bodies from one another.

Taking cues from Felix Guattari's *Chaosmosis*, Berardi describes how the rhythmic experience is the chaosmic experience, is the poetic experience.

*"Chaosmosis" means breathing with chaos—
"osmosis" implies breathing together—
but in this osmosis with chaos a new harmony emerges, a new sympathy, a new syntony.*

Berardi

Through poetic experience we can create common space, away from the tyranny of the algorithm, away from the clutches of industrialised time.

Poetry as a rhythmic experience can mobilise against the algorithmic, as the algorithm reformats the semiotic sphere of perception, suffocating the vibratory nature of biorhythms.

Berardi

*The biorhythmic conjunction of conscious and sensitive organisms is a vibrating relation:
through it, individual organisms seek a common rhythm,
a common emotional ground of understanding,
and this quest is a sort of oscillation that results in a possible (or impossible) syntony.*



A topical analysis of rhythm (in the body) will give us the void and a series of events



The body falls in and out of consciousness.
It is a turbulent structure,
made up of a cacophony of rhythms,
both regular and irregular,
caught between days and nights,

action and inaction,
events and the void.

The body replays repetitions in circularity,
undulating and pulsating,
palpitating and resonating.

Wilhelm Fleiss' concept of biorhythms,
devised in the late 19th century,
presents an attempt at mapping the regular undulations
of biological rhythmic cycles.

According to Fleiss,
there are three biorhythmic cycles
that all human beings are subjected to:
physical, emotional and intellectual

The 23 day Physical cycle primarily concerns:
coordination,
wellbeing,
and strength.

The 28 day Emotional cycle primarily concerns:
creativity,
sensitivity,
mood,
perception,
and awareness.

The 33 day Intellectual cycle primarily concerns:
alertness,
analytical functioning,
logical analysis,
memory or recall,
and communication.

Within each individual, the cycles start at birth
and then rhythmically repeat on a regular frequency until death,
the only variation being the interaction between locations on corresponding cycles,
as all three cycles are of differing lengths of time.

A place on each cycle can be calculated by the following equations
(t being the number of days since birth):

physical: $\sin(2\pi t/23)$
emotional: $\sin(2\pi t/28)$
intellectual: $\sin(2\pi t/33)$

Each cycle is composed of an ascending and descending sine wave curve,
which progresses in a linear fashion,
constituting a sonic property of biofeedback
determining certain functionalities in the mind, the body and the spirit.

When the sine wave reaches the top event,
that particular property is operating at a high capacity.
When the sine wave reaches the bottom event,
that particular property is operating at a low capacity.

Biorhythms became particularly popular in the 1970s,
the decade of self help and alternative knowledge practices.

In video arcades one could find biorhythm machines
to calculate (or dictate) monthly fluctuations,
or, for the more diligent chronicler,
handheld biorhythm calculators,
such as the *Kosmos 1* or the *Casio Biolator*,
could be kept in a pocket at all times.

In the present day, various mobile phone applications exist
to locate your precise location on the confluence of sine waves.

My favourite application is *BioMate*,
in which you can program the corresponding biorhythms
for yourself and your romantic partner,
in order, for instance, to discover whether a string of particularly bad arguments
could be due to an unfortunate lack of synchronicity in rhythms,
rather than to an inherent incompatibility in personalities.

Biorhythms have now commonly been debunked as pseudoscience,
but, although perhaps scientifically moot,
the model of cyclical biorhythmic affectation
is perhaps a useful metaphorical and poetic tool,
to suggest the presence of alternative formats of vibrational knowledge
and synchronous cycles in the collective consciousness
that can affect methods and actions of thought.



A topical analysis of rhythm (in thought) will give us the void and a series of events.



To think of a background, populated by people,
each experiencing a synchronised feeling of rhythmic elaboration,
moving from event to event, from breath to breath,
collectively respiring, with a harmonised intonation.

To think of a background, populated by people,
each experiencing their individual feelings and rhythmic elaborations,
moving from event to event, from breath to breath,
singularly respiring, with their own intonations.

We can take rhythm, this tender interval, this relational factor
and apply it to the occurrence of seemingly simultaneous events
within the production of thought processes in the individual subject.

For instance, my simultaneous thought processes whilst writing this text
are focused on a multitude of concurrences,
each of which are firing and operating at different frequencies
and are denoting actions of varying temporal dimensions.

These range between deadline anxieties and coronavirus concerns
and rumbling stomachs and lower back aches
and scheduling clashes and hopeful intentions
and slow car crashes and temperature infractions
and friends drifting away and gym training plans
and letting things go and temporary solutions
and reading lists and daydreaming bliss
and the tyranny of writing and too much coffee
and a slight indigestion and missing my family
and electricity bills and rising world climates
and miserable doubt, miserable miserable doubt
and five year plans and budgetary worries
and feeling like something is not working
and feeling like something is working.

Rhythmic thought processes navigate between these intensities,
jumping between conceptual clouds within my mind,
straddling time zones, devoid of space,
in a multiplicity of tempos.

Simultaneously separating and blurring experience from experience,
the frequencies in the void between events,
I somehow think of all of these
and of none of these at once.

The rhythmic encounter
between this all and none
this one from another
is constituted of
a sticky connective tissue
in the matter of the void.

Thinking of rhythm.
Thinking as rhythm.

Rhythm does not discriminate,
there is no hierarchy,
instead there is only temporal elasticity
and tender intervals,
where true time lurks.



// References //

Berardi, Franco, *Breathing: Chaos and Poetry* (Semiotext(e), 2018)

Cage, John, *Silence: Lectures and Writings* (Wesleyan University Press, 2011)

Ikoniadou, Eleni, *The Rhythmic Event: Art, Media and the Sonic* (MIT Press, 2014)

Guattari, Felix, *Chaosmosis: An Ethico-Aesthetic Paradigm* (Indiana University Press, 1995)

Nabokov, Vladimir, *Ada, or Ardor: A Family Chronicle* (Vintage, 1990)