

Your body is not separate from the body of the universe, because at quantum mechanical levels there are no well-defined edges. You are like a wiggle, a wave, a fluctuation, a convolution, a whirlpool, a localized disturbance in the larger quantum field. The larger quantum field - the universe - is your extended body.

This paper deploys rhythm as its main conceptual and sensorial operator, liberating it from human and humanistic corporealities, habits and purposes and re-qualifying it as an attribute of matter, a galvanising current flowing throughout animate and inanimate, organic and inorganic bodies. Biological rhythm, social and cultural rhythm, the rhythm of acoustic waves passing through the amplifying and intensifying filter of technology, and through the materialistic philosophy of Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari.

*1st Step: How does it work?*

According to Deleuze and Guattari, the periodic repetition of a unit (such as the beat of a musical composition) realises a code of behaviour, a metric reiteration which allows to discipline the body and its movements through identification, synchronisation and communication mechanisms. In other words, the homogeneous and specular reproduction of constant units or copies (as in genetic, cultural or information codes) acts as an instrument for the bio-physical identification of a human body, for its regular functioning in a social environment and for its efficient use of cybernetic systems. Metric reiteration is the accurate clock which enables a body to recognise its organic and human identity (the biological code based on genetic and cellular reproduction), to perform its ordered movements and interactions (the social code based on rigid behavioural structures) and to adapt technology to its own aims (the digital code based on clear information exchange). In this sense, meter would correspond to what Deleuze defines as 'generality', i.e. a set of immutable laws regulating the identity and resemblance of subjects and their equivalence to designated terms and schemes, while also allowing for political and economic control. The preservation of these physical, social and cybernetic identities depends on a series of more or less porous, more or less rigid confines.

Recuperating old presocratic and atomistic ideas (such as Lucretius' notion of 'clinamen'), Deleuze and Guattari define rhythm as an imperceptible, quantum coagulation or dispersion of matter behind perceivable units. From this point of view, the rhythm of a soundtrack would follow the wave of its acoustic qualities (pitch, intensity, frequency, speed), rather than the metric pulse of its beats. In the same way, the rhythm of a dance would depend more on the intensive qualities of the moving body, on its play with gravitational forces and speed, rather than on the linear succession of its steps. Rather than to equality and equivalence, the development of rhythm is more related to singularity and uniqueness, disruption and trans-coding, as something which does not flow in a linear way but cuts across, a 'transmission' which is not a [straightforward] communication [but] a 'transduction': a self-propagating movement seeding serial self-organizations, (...)' [10] Linking together heterogeneous groups (of molecules and cells, human populations, information units), this transmission of rhythm opens every bio-physical, social or technical organisation to identity contaminations, synchronicity disruptions and communication disturbances. After that, bodies cease to recognise themselves, to orient themselves and to function in cybernetic systems. In this sense, we can define the disturbing spread of rhythm as a viral propagation infecting all biological, social or cybernetic bodies. [11]

### *2nd Step: Bio-Physical Rhythm*

The first isolation and blocking of the viral force of rhythm is performed by the bio-physical organisation, i.e. by the very constitution of the body as a living, moving and perceiving organism. After defining rhythm as an attribute characterising all the molecular, microscopic dynamics of matter (in other words, rhythm as a continuous energetic vibration spreading from chemical reactions), matter loses its static appearance and becomes an ensemble of dancing molecules. This dancing matter becomes then organised into inorganic and organic, moving and perceiving bodies through particular hierarchical and functional dispositions of elements. Sequences of molecules and cells, neuro/chemical paths and a multiplicity of particles/signals, organs, tissues and apparatuses align themselves in a particular order, building up the biological conformation of an organism and its formal, anatomical structure. The evolution of the human species and its separation from the organic world happens then through a particular systematisation of organs and through particular morphological (arms, legs, head), postural (standing position) and kinetic features, gestures and movements, together with the development of a particular sensori-motor system and a capacity for perceptual/behavioural coordination.

At the same time, myriads of molecular movements and relations perform their own schizo/rhythmic development, provoking a sort of micro-kin-aesthetics of imperceptible alterations and deviations in the organised bodily system, deviations which are immanent to the harmonic and functional equilibrium of the whole organism. In other words, while the 'organic organisation' of a body is based on the formation, specialisation and communication of all its parts, at a microscopic level this organisation is continuously de-coded and dis-articulated. Sound (as light) crosses skin, walls, electric membranes and porous surfaces. A destructive impulse gets across bodies, destruction as an attack against confines, towards the most vulnerable parts exposed to the external, the doors and windows of an individual space. [...] Acting as a sort of physiological viral development, the molecular propagation of energy (sound waves) across a living/moving body follows the same rhythmic patterns of an epidemic diffusion. This rhythmic vector of energetic spreading cuts across the very organisation of the body: the transversal weaving of the sound wave along the acoustic channel decentralises and trans-forms the integrated image and coordinated actions of the body. Between ear and brain, sound is everywhere. In the muscular/skeletal apparatus, the spread of rhythm results into a viral energetic diffusion through the nerves, in a sort of neural micro-dynamics fractally composing movement and dance as a series of involuntary jerks, variable speed relations and gravitational lines of flight. In the dancing body, the energetic dance of the acoustic wave produces a series of molecular alterations and generates multiple local realisations, dispersions and excesses. Deleuze and Guattari would define them as 'Lilliputian hallucinations', interferences coming from the cables of new physiologies and technologies. [...] Every perception is amplified: while considering sound as linear information to be exchanged limits perception to confined sectors of social and biological stratification, its own movement and molecular self-organisation amplifies the perceptual band and extends it. This sort of perceptual micro-piracy immediately elicits a necessity for control. Power builds walls. Sensory surfaces are walls of resonance where the intensity of perception continuously bounces off. This provokes a relay between the corporeal and incorporeal dimensions. [...] Sound stands still and dwells in a place until trance comes, and then it

suddenly changes. It is the machinic functioning of rhythm. The result is a metamorphosis and becoming of the body, and its passage through progressive states of corporeal dissolution which put it in direct affective contact with the animal, the organic and the physical world.

### *3rd Step: Social Rhythm*

After the passage of rhythm from sound waves to bodily movements, movement performances become culturally organised among different social groups. In its social, collective dimension, dance is usually identified with the act of 'keeping time together for a prolonged period, (...) so as to establish a regular beat' and allow a group (a social body) to move according to a common rhythm. [12] In evolutionary, darwinian terms, this activity is associated to the enhancement of group homogenisation and to the dissipation of friction through imitation and synchronisation. In this sense, dance becomes a kinetic, cultural and social organisation aiming at the material preservation and cultural integrity of a collective body. Uniform kinetic habits and corporeal regulations, geographic confines and ethnic, sexual or class discriminations, gestures and steps constitute the rigid grid which entraps and moulds the free circulation of rhythm inside and between social groups. At the same time, the kine-topology of rhythm reveals that solid and stable social structures are eroded by uncontrollable subterranean movements, as that micro (or local) aggregations of crazy particles/people gather or move around particular speed attractors, drawing a schizo/rhythmic map across cities, states and continents. Rhythm's micro-physical turbulences determine a series of intensive alterations in the social field, gathering or scattering masses of people in crowds and tribes that move beyond the impermeable segmentations imposed by cultural and socio-kinetic discipline. Disturbing the social equilibrium of all identified groups, rhythm acts as a virus whose propagation is often historically and socially linked to epidemic diffusions and episodes of 'populational' contacts. As a viral spreading or transversal weaving of the speed and intensity of sounds and dances across cultural codes, rhythm is physiological to the social organisation of life. It decentralises and de-forms every rigid cultural morphology or behavioural regularity through the molecular movements of a collective body in continuous passage and change. On this social layer, technological apparatuses emerge (from old acoustic drums to the digital sampling and mixing machines of contemporary electronic music), provoking rhythmic amplifications and turbulences that infect the bodily sensorial system and corrode the borders of a regimented social relationality, while freely travelling across time and space.

After the first contacts with the Saracens (a North-African population coming from the Maghreb desert in the 11th and 12th centuries) and up to the 1960s, a dancing ritual is active in the whole Mediterranean, together with the belief that the bite of a particular spider (the Taranta) provokes an illness which can only be cured through music and dance. In the ritual the sounds of the Tarantella music, together with the contemplation of particular colours, incite the Tarantata (the bitten person, usually a woman) to evoke and exorcise the force of the spider's poison through dance. In this way, the dance intervenes on the irruption of subjective and personal feelings of sadness and exhaustion by assembling an animistic-sonic machine, a microcosm where the orchestra, the sick person's movements, sounds and colours contribute to the reconfiguration of bodily and social relations and to the restoration of the shattered equilibrium. Like a virus, sonic vibrations are transmitted to the body and spread according to laws that establish different power relations. Accordingly, the ontogeous

spread of Tarantella's rhythm across both physical and social levels of the contaminated body troubles and re-organises social life in an autonomous, local way.

'It has been shown that being possessed derives from a training; that the gestures, words, or cries of the possessed are coded; that the beginning of the crisis is governed by a set of rules.' [...] In Jose' Gil's anthropological analysis of dance rites, cultural training does not explain the mysterious trance of the possessed body: how can a discourse act on a body and its organs in such a powerful way? How is this 'remote control' possible? In Gil's words, what transforms a ritual in something more than a symbolic structure is the link between signs and forces, and the investment of energy which the body imposes on symbols. In this sense, being possessed by a spider derives from the transmission of a force (rhythm) infecting the body and provoking a pathological condition physically and socially realised and resolved through dance. The symbolic imitation of a poisoned person or of the spider's movements dissolves then into an energetic contamination relating the dancer to the qualitative traits of a particular Taranta, i.e. to the particular colours and sounds by which she is possessed.

On the same theoretical line, Deleuze and Guattari oppose to cultural symbolism and imitation the notion of 'becoming' as an alliance, a symbiosis between beings of totally different scales, species, worlds (from sound molecules and human cells to animal and human bodies). [...] From this point of view, the Taranta rite appears as a becoming, a transversal communication or a contagious event. Beyond human identification and beyond cultural resemblance or imitation, the becoming-spider of the dancing body lies in itself, in the metamorphic process cutting across all fixed positions (woman-tarantula, African-European, old-new). Deleuze and Guattari's notion of becoming highlights the modes of expansion, occupation and contagion of a body as a molecular population, and of a population as a molecular body. Through its becoming-spider, and then its becoming-sound and -colour, the fascinated and possessed self of the Tarantata reaches a molecular dimension of imperceptible sound and light molecules.

The sonic and dancing assemblage of the Tarantella ritual weaves a series of social relations 'prior to' the separation between individual members or between different cultural groups, and prior to the creation of a subjective identity and space. Compared with the rigid and closed borders and to the individual cubicles of the social gridlock, the kinetology of rituals works as a much more wide-mesh filter, allowing uncontrollable rhythmic contaminations among people and between different territories, overcoming institutional as well as perceptual apparatuses of subjectification. From acoustic to electronic drumming, the old and new assemblages of dance rituals (all made of sonic machines and dancing bodies, sounds and colours) realise a depersonalising and desubjectifying becoming of the dancing body through perceptual and kinetic amplification. In contemporary rituals, the transformation of technical machines works and expands in the same way, provoking physical turbulences and speed amplifications which infect bodily sensorial systems and cross the borders of social relationality. Re-enacting in our days the disappeared Tarantella exorcisms, rave parties represent new dance rituals with their own rhythmic qualities, as particular forms of technological becoming. The main aspect of the twenty-four hour (or even more) rave experience is a particular state of trance in which the dancer is totally possessed by a rhythm which catalyses her energies as a way to access unknown parts of her body/mind.

In his multidimensional and interdisciplinary analysis of electronic dance music, Kodwo Eshun describes the sound studio as a lab, a research centre for the breaking down of the beat as the infinitesimal sound molecule. [...] Through the digital sampler, a sequence of sounds can be played for an infinite number of times, cut into small bits and re-ordered, accelerated or slowed down. The separation of singular elements and

fragments forming the multiple felt of acoustic material is realised as a 'granulation' of sound. At a perceptual level, sampling and mixing techniques elude any cognitive and decoding attempt made on the basis of a Cartesian body/mind notion, disrupting the listener's and dancer's subjective perceptual states (as stratified hearings and organised motions) into a collective web of multiple sensations. With their combinations of acoustic amplifications, visuals, techno sounds and drugs(usually Ecstasy), techno-parties give the sound/colour ritual assemblages a new realisation, technologically amplifying the possession and trance state of tribal dance. At the same time, the rhythmic relation between technology, techno and dance and the continuous movements of the ravers-travellers across nations transforms the party scene into a social nomadic practice or a combination of extensive and intensive voyages. Beyond styles and divisions, rave parties unite generations, classes and races, all inextricably bound by sound, drug and technology.

To conclude, the rhythmic passage from African drumming and dancing rituals to the North Mediterranean Tarantella dance, up to contemporary rave parties, represents a vector of epidemiological rhythmicity, carrying across the waves a micro-physical environment of bodies, tales, beliefs, animals, chemical substances and musical instruments flowing across time and space.