

Rhuthmos / Arithmos Deconsidered¹

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Abstract

We all know by now why a kid starts whistling in the middle of a territory unknown. Refrain builds up a milieu, deterritorialising all the forces of the unknown with the ear of an other. However, have we as yet considered how the ear gets into resonance with the transformation of the unknown into the known? In other words, are we capable of knowing the unknown as such? Are we capable of translating the rhythms of the unknown into the known? And if yes, what are those issues that we put at risk in such a move? Without doubt, Heidegger and Agamben would be of great help for us to discover the aletheia of rhythm, as if it is possible to know what rhythm is. However, our intention here is to talk about ears, rhythms, deterritorialisation of the ears without falling into the trap of phenomenological circle. Dear rhuthmos, is all our knowledge of rhythm circumscribed by a division that cannot be maintained by an ear?

The question

Since Homer's depiction of it, the passage of Odysseus's ship by the dark and enchanting abode of the Sirens became the concern of many artists, authors and philosophers, primary examples of which are Adorno and Horkheimer's rendition in the *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (Adorno & Horkheimer 1944) and Kafka's *Silence of the Sirens* (Kafka 1931). Albeit the fact that the two had not too much in common, lack of any reference to rhythm in these texts is appalling as the sound or the silence (of the Sirens) as well as the rowing of the oarsmen are the main constituents of the scene not to mention Odysseus's inability of hearing the harmony and rhythm of the Sirens's song. Rhythm or "rhuthmos" as the ancient Greeks would call it had a very peculiar non-present presence in thought, politics, education and control mechanisms as carefully detailed by Pascal Michon (2018) recently. Present as much as Plato would allow it and non-present insofar as it is related to its Pre-Socratic origins. To what extent can we insist on a metaphysical tradition which claims that "rhythm" is an audible artifact manufactured by sound, movement and time related to fixed forms and consequently to education and control? And, on the other hand, to what extent can we maintain a position vis-a-vis Kafka as to the inaudibility of rhythm if our situation is determined by an either/or situation, that is, no matter how our ears are

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stopped by wax or not we will never be able to hear the rhythm not only because Sirens are “silenced” since from the start but also and mainly because *rhuthmos* in its origins have got nothing to do with time, interval and periodic repetition, and, therefore, with audibility but it is related to an understanding of shape in flow, in continuous change, that is, *becoming*?

Pre-Socratics

Let me tell you first that in an earlier essay, *On Rhythm, Resonance and Distortion* (Aracagök 2003), I had argued that rhythm is not only a matter of a punctured tympanum, that is, it can be heard or conceptualised only after the event, but also that almost all our approaches to rhythm is metaphysical due to an impossibility of overcoming our understanding of rhythm with reference to interval, a certain type of temporality which we inherited from Plato. In this essay I argued for a position which critiqued Agamben's determination of rhythm with regard to a certain quote from Hölderlin and Heidegger's notion of “*aletheia*” which kept the audibility of rhythm *as such* as a promise of truth.

At that time I did not consider Émile Benveniste's influential piece on rhythm (Benveniste 1966) and now only “after the event”, I came across with his reformulation of *rhuthmos* with regard to Pre-Socratic philosophers such as Heraclitus, Leucippus and Democritus. What I would like to do in this essay will be to remix Benveniste's critique with what I already wrote in an earlier essay as to the “audibility” of *rhuthmos* in order to open up a possible passage to the “political”.

Now if we return to Benveniste, *ῥυθμός* (*rhuthmós*) was in use from the 7th to the 4th century in Greek lyric and tragic poetry and it became a technical term only with the ancient Ionian philosophers, especially the creators of atomism, Leucippus and Democritus in 5th c BC. Since from its earlier usage in 7th c BC, *rhuthmos* meant “form” or “shape”, *σχῆμα* (*skhêma*). Although it is related to the concept of form, as Benveniste argues, *rhuthmos* had also different connotations such as «a temporary disposition of something flowing», or «a particular way of flowing» or «a particular modality of fulfillment of an action» (Michon 2018a: 17). All this pointed to the fact that *rhuthmos* had a different relationship to form, that is, unlike the fixed, immobile meaning it would assume with Plato, in Pre-Socratic philosophy, it denoted “shape in variation”. In other words, *rhuthmos* did not «designate the fulfillment of the notion but the particular modality of its fulfillment, as it presents itself to the eyes» (Benveniste 1966: 286).

It was with Plato, the former understanding of *rhuthmos* dramatically changed, or rather given a fixed, immobile form. However, behind Plato's reformulation there were several other concerns which played a great role in the transformation of *rhuthmos* into rhythm which we still use today. Now if we look at the Pre-Socratic philosophers it becomes clear that it would take some centuries to introduce metaphysics into thought, that

is, a clear-cut distinction between the heavens and the earth. And I believe this tremendous difference can be accounted for by considering again Benveniste's claim about the difference between "shapes in variation" and "fixed forms", or more philosophically the difference between "becoming" and "being". Let us ask in the first place, how were people explaining the cosmos to themselves before Plato's introduction of ideas, fixed forms, mimesis, models and copies into thought?

For example, for Heraclitus there was no God who created the cosmos but it always was, is, and will be as in the ways in which fire comes and goes out of life in the form of "need and satiety". Fire, for Heraclitus, is a primary element from which all things come and to which they return. This back and forth, or better yet, this tension and distension is characteristic of life and reality – a reality that cannot function without contraries, such as war and strife. In his *Cratylus*, Plato quotes Heraclitus, via the mouthpiece of Cratylus, as saying that «you could not step twice into the same river» (Graham 2010: 158), comparing this to the way everything in life is in constant flux. In other words, for Heraclitus, the cosmos and all things that make it up are what they are through the tension and distention of time and *becoming*. The river is what it is by being what it is not. Fire, or the ever burning cosmos, is at war with itself, and yet at peace at the same time.

As for Atomists like Leucippus and his pupil Democritus, the cosmos was made of small primary bodies infinite in number, indivisible and imperishable, qualitatively similar, but distinguished by their shapes. Moving eternally through the infinite void, they collide and unite, thus generating objects which differ in accordance with the varieties, in number, size, shape, and arrangement, of the atoms which compose them. In other words, for atomists the cosmos was in constant change with regard to the atoms coming together and separating from each other. Atoms stayed together until some larger environmental force broke them apart, at which point they resumed their constant motion.

According to most of the Pre-Socratic philosophers, there was no such distinction between upper parts and the lower parts of the cosmos: rather "form" *as such* did not appear. *Skhêma*, instead, was conceived as a kind of form in continuous variance, continuous becoming, as it would be in Herakletian flow. *Rhuthmos*, though sometimes used to denote form, was actually considered to be the shape of things in perennial variation. As Democritus suggested, the shape of things were in continuous variation because the atoms of which they are made were in continuous movement so as to give the things flowing shapes rather than fixed forms. So the cosmos was not a chaotic place but it was not a well ordered place either. *Becoming* rather than *Being* was the key word for the Pre-Socratics. *Rhuthmos* did have nothing to do with interval nor time: it only denoted the coming into being or rather the continuous becoming and variation of shapes.

Things dramatically changed with Plato when he introduced metaphysics into thought. With the introduction of Plato's cosmos divided into two as heavens and earth, *Rhuthmos* assumed a profoundly different conceptualisation. As we learn from Michon (Michon 2018a: 28-68), in the beginning Plato was completely against the idea of *rhuthmos* as he

thought an ambiguous understanding of *rhuthmos* which pertains to earlier, Pre-Socratic philosophers could be quite harmful to his Republic. All because *rhuthmos* which escapes fixed form would lead astray its citizens: music, dance, tragedy, poetry or uncontrolled representation, that is mimesis, could lead men to formlessness and therefore to their destruction. Yet there was also another option for him such that a new understanding of *rhuthmos* as *rhythm* could be employed – as that based on intervals and time – to educate the young citizen's mind and body. The Republic could use rhythm as a political tool to encourage the society to good nature and good temperament, and hence, making it liable to control. It could only be achieved via the construction of a metaphysical order according to which the universe would be divided into two, heavens and earth, idea and fixed forms, model and copy, and mimesis proper: fixed rhythm of heavenly bodies to be repeated by man if he would attain a virtuous and moral life. Accordingly, such an order could be maintained by the metering (*métron*) and numbering of heavenly rhythms. The order of heavens was based on this new idea of rhythm which is the heart of *logos*, determined by the numbers acting as determining forms between the finite and the infinite, unformed and the formed. Therefore, although the Demiurge created the earth as a copy of the well-ordered, well rhythmized heavens, since man was not a full tempered being who could be misguided to disorders and change, he could move towards perfection by discovering and imitating the forms/rhythms of the heavens.

When *rhuthmos* becomes rhythm or form with Plato, the question of the inaudibility of rhythm *as such* is also erased and the paths that would lead from Ancient Greece to Heidegger and Agamben are opened wide. All because, if in Plato's formulation, rhythm *as such* was available to man as an audible term, it was due to man's capacity to conceive the ideal forms given by the Gods; all he had to do was to give form to the ideal rhythm in a model and copy relationship as in a passage from the unformed to the formed which was made manageable by positing a passage from chaos to order as well as from an unknown, unconceived order to a knowable one by means of numbers which predetermined the intervals and the time, necessary for the production of rhythm as the audible.

If we return to Heidegger and Agamben, *aletheia* and *arithmos* as theorised and conceived by them are only the distant echoes of the question of audibility of rhythm as treated by Plato. Is the truth of rhythm maintainable? Yes, as long as it is posited as something audible. Or, can rhythm have a truth? Yes, insofar as it is posited as audible.

Re-routing

What are the advantages of conceptualising rhythm as something audible? What might be the political implications of doing so? Although Pascal Michon clearly answers these questions in his works from a rather historically determinist position, my answers will delve into the question of metaphysics, aesthetics and, therefore, philosophy, and will aim

to throw light on the distinction between the *rhuthmos* (and by implication the political) and rhythm (and by implication the politics) which has been so well preserved even today since Plato's formulation of rhythm as recounted above.

First of all I should put forward a series of claims with some questions in order to re-route our discussion on rhythm towards more philosophical concerns.

i. That to think, to speak and to write about rhythm requires and does not require rhythm at the same time can be obtained from a line of thought which aims to preserve its unthought not as something that can be thought or written or spoken about but as that which makes one aware of the absent presence of the unthought, as "something", or perhaps as the "inaudible"².

ii. Yet how one approaches this term also determines the "meaning(s)" associated with this term. Can we understand rhythm? Is it possible to understand rhythm *as such*? If it is possible then, how? Furthermore, why should we understand rhythm *as such*?

iii. Can we hear the rhythm? Or, is the *rhuthmos* audible?

iv. One possible way of understanding rhythm can be found in a traditional appropriation of the word ... Rhythm: division of a supposed continuum into intervals, an attempt at temporalization? Yet, that which is known as a continuum of time is a continuum only when time is conceptualised as a *succession of points* – rhythm thus can be conceptualised as a division of continuum of time into intervals only when time is made of points – of what? Of the experience of the one who experiences it? Yet, does *rhythm* have a subject? Does the *subject* have a rhythm? Is it possible to approach rhythm without appropriation? Is it possible to formulate a concept of rhythm without falling into the determinations of an epistemology of subject? Is it possible to consider the heard and the unheard of rhythm without betraying them?

Hölderlin

Getting into resonance with these preliminary claims and questions, I would like to concentrate on two pieces written by Giorgio Agamben, entitled, "Poiesis and Praxis" (Agamben 1999: 68-93) and "The Original Structure of Work of Art" (Agamben 1999: 94-103). The latter opens with the following paragraph and since we will be referring to it frequently in the rest of the essay, it would be to our benefit to quote it at length here:

"Everything is rhythm, the entire destiny of man is one heavenly rhythm, just as every work of art is one rhythm, and everything swings from the poetizing lips of the god."
This statement was not passed down to us by Hölderlin's own hand. It is from a period

² Concerning the question of the "unthought", particularly, in Heidegger, I would like to acknowledge my debt to Lacoue-Labarthe's essays "Obliteration" and "Apocryphal Nietzsche," (Lacoue-Labarthe 1993) and to his work in general.

of his life – 1807-1843 – that we usually define as the years of his insanity. The words that compose it were transcribed by a visitor's sympathetic hand from the "incoherent speech" that he uttered in his room in the house of the carpenter Zimmer. (Agamben 1999: 94)

Poiesis, praxis and will

In his essay, *Poiesis and Praxis*, tracing etymologically the (original) meaning of *poiesis*, *praxis* and *work*, Agamben lays bare the historical evolution these words went through in Western thought. According to him the (hi)story – for this is a story of a fall – of these words is as follows: *poiesis* in time is conjoined with *praxis* only to be subsumed under the general concept of *work*. From Roman times on, *work* started to signify production with the sole aim of putting into *action* whereas formerly these three represented different realms in their relationship to "limit". Thus, "bringing into presence" which was the main concern of art (*poiesis*) in the beginning was replaced by an aesthetic production of works (*praxis*) and a concern for principles that constitute art as an aesthetic realm.

For Agamben, it was in Nietzsche that the ultimate unity of *poiesis* and *praxis* culminated into "will to power". If the will that only wills itself represented this evolution, a will which is willed by opening itself to an application of "being" to "becoming" was what Nietzsche introduced into metaphysical tradition. Therefore, Nietzsche's thought was a «thought of art» (Agamben 1999: 85).

According to Agamben, these distinctions between *poiesis*, *praxis* and *work* have been obscured in time as a result of a tendency which prioritised "voluntary production of an effect" above all. In contrast, the most obvious distinction between *poiesis* and *praxis* was that for *poiesis*, there did not necessarily have to be something actualized which can be represented either in the form of a work or an art work. In other words, that which unveiled itself might or might not find embodiment in an artwork for what exactly distinguished it from *praxis* was the lack of the will of the artist in *poiesis* and the will of the artist in *praxis* as "voluntary production of an effect", that is, the active will of the artist to represent this experience in an artwork. Consequently, if, after this development, one can talk about "the particular characteristics of the artistic process" there is a more convenient way of defining it: aesthetics.

For Agamben, all Western thought – basically metaphysical – therefore can be seen as a series of «attempts to transcend aesthetics and to give a new status to artistic production [which] have started from the blurring of the distinction between *poiesis* and *praxis*, that is from the interpretation of art as a mode of *praxis* and of the *praxis* as the expression of a will and a creative force» (Agamben 1999: 71). Novalis, Nietzsche, Artaud, the Situationists, therefore, attempted in vain to posit the essence of «human activity as will and vital impulse» (Agamben 1999: 72) because what they strived for was in fact a «forgetting of

the original productive status of the work of art as foundation of the space of truth» (Agamben 1999: 71).

Metaphysics and Aesthetics

The last section of the *poiesis* essay, *Art Is the Highest Task and the Truly Metaphysical Activity of Man*³ is devoted to a reading of Nietzsche which crosses the labyrinthine bridge between Nietzsche's early and late works as Heidegger's Zarathustra (Heidegger 1967: 411-31) crosses the bridge in order to reach the truth. Now "will" is transformed into "will to power" and equated with "eternal recurrence", thereby made bearing witness to the Nietzschean project of transforming life into art, that is, transforming the whole of life into an art work not by means of the will of the artist but by transformation of the will into a general will. These are the final sentences of the essay:

Art is the eternal self-generation of the will to power. As such, it detaches itself both from the activity of the artist and from the sensibility of the spectator to posit itself as the fundamental trait of universal becoming. A fragment from the years 1885-86 reads: "The work of art where it appears without an artist, e.g., as body as organism ... To what extent the artist is only a preliminary stage. The world as a work of art that gives birth to itself". (Agamben 1999: 93)

Agamben comments no more after this quotation and it seems as if we are asked to conclude that this is the final stage of the *poiesis*' fall into the hegemony of the will and since then what has been ruling man is this fallen state in which he is condemned to metaphysics and aesthetics. Without doubt this position emanates from a special perspective from which Agamben formerly has looked at a famous Nietzschean aphorism in the *Will to Power*: «Recapitulation: To impose upon becoming the character of being – that is the supreme will to power» (Nietzsche 1967: 330).

Everything, rhythm and art

To my knowledge, it hardly occurred to anyone to take this quotation by Hölderlin – which opens Agamben's essay – «Everything is rhythm, the entire destiny of man is one heavenly rhythm, just as every work of art is one rhythm, and everything swings from the poetizing lips of the god» – as bearing witness to the question of the visible. Now perhaps

³ This is the last sentence of the preface that Nietzsche wrote to his *The Birth of Tragedy* in 1871. (Nietzsche 1990: 17).

this is a rather perverse way of approaching this but is not this parallelism between “everything is rhythm” and “just as every work of art is one rhythm” drawn by Hölderlin in order to throw light on “everything” by asking “art” in all its visibility to be present as witness to the invisible rhythm in “everything”? Asking this question facilitates one with seeing the potentiality of “everything” having a rhythm but not by way of identifying “art” with “everything”. That is, Hölderlin offers us no direct passage from the visible or audible rhythm of the art work to that “everything is rhythm”. In other words, Hölderlin does not guarantee that one can see or hear this but one can only think of it as the inaudible, as the invisible, which can be thought only “as” and not *as such* of the audible or visible rhythm of the artwork. I guess this way of thinking about the radical otherness of everything which is compared by Hölderlin to artwork invites us to a rethinking of the relationship of the unthought to thought in this quotation and also the distinction between the Pre-Socratic *rhythmos* and Plato’s rendering of it as rhythm.

Something else: *ousia*

Agamben’s move to save *poiesis* from the metaphysics of will, or, basically, from metaphysics, or aesthetics, goes by way of showing that rhythm is not a structure in the sense that Structuralism appropriated it. After discussing Aristotle’s claim – which the philosopher adopted from Antiphon – that rhythm is what gives structure to «elemental, inarticulate nature» (Agamben 1999: 95), Agamben compares the implications of this theory with Structuralism in general. If rhythm should be generally understood as structure and if structure is «a whole that contains something more than the simple sum of its parts» then this «something» is something else, something other than the elements and that “which must exist in someway» (Agamben 1999: 96). What Structuralism did, in that sense was nothing different from Pythagoreans who sought this element, this something other, in *αριθμοί* (*arithmoi*), numbers. Numbers for them constituted the original principle of all things. «Structural analysis, then understands structure not only as *ρυθμοζ* but also as a number and elemental principle» (Agamben 1999: 97).

For Aristotle, on the other hand, this “something else” should be something that is “radically other” which opens “a more essential dimension”:

Aristotle designates this dimension as the *αίτια του ειναι*, the “cause of being”, and the *ουσια*, the principle that gives origin and maintains everything in presence: not a material element but Form (*μορφη και ειδοζ*). Therefore, in the passage from the second book the *Physics* referred to earlier, Aristotle refuses the theory expounded by Antiphon and by all those who define nature as elementary matter, *το απρθημιστον*, and instead identifies nature, that is, the original principle of presence, precisely with *ρυθμοζ*, structure understood synonymous with Form. (Agamben 1999: 97)

Now what happens in Aristotle is the abolition of the hierarchy between elemental, inarticulate nature and structure as ρυθμοζ (rhythmos): thus, these concepts, such as, structure, rhythmos, and Form are subsumed under a general concept of ουσια (ousia), presence. That is, form is always already there in nature because of the original principle, ουσια (ousia), all of which of course gives way to the question of rhythmos, whether it can be sensed as such or as something that can be calculated as in Structuralism.

Agamben's criticism, without doubt, does not prefer Structuralism because, it «understands structure not only as αριθμοζ but also as a number and elemental principle» (Agamben 1999: 97), as something more than its elements and thus it is how it aims to transcend aesthetics by searching for the original principle that is located outside its elements, such as mathematical precision (αριθμοζ, arithmos, just as in the case of Pythagoreans).

If rhythm should be seen as something else, that is, as something radically other, Agamben is quite careful not to offer a concept of rhythm that can be felt "as such". Rhythm, therefore, as Hölderlin put it, is not a structure in the sense of αριθμοζ (arithmos), that is, something calculable, but, instead, is related to ουσια (ousia), the principle of presence that «opens and maintains the work of art in its original space» (Agamben 1999: 98). I think, what happens here in Agamben's criticism, by a sleight of hand, is to literally obliterate what Hölderlin, in his madness, quite carefully formulated, that is, the division of "everything" and "art". In other words, Hölderlin does not talk about a possibility of projecting what is peculiar to "art" to "everything", he only makes a comparison, without identifying one with the other. In that sense, what the poet formulates as something visible, audible, or simply, as sensible for art is applied by Agamben to "everything" who defined his position as saving poiesis from aesthetics.

Wrong applications

Now, Nietzsche's position with regard to "truth" is obvious as early as his *The Birth of Tragedy* where he finds the embodiment of this attitude in the person of Socrates. Given this attitude, which Nietzsche defines as the attitude of the Socratic man, tragic view of life opposes it in the sense of a singularity (or, rather, appearances) which knows no distinction between universal and particular. If the production of thought is what can only be obtained by means of a knowledge whose validity is guaranteed by a universal concept of truth, the tragic view of life privileges a certain abyss which cannot be crossed unless by way of scientific approximation. Without doubt, Nietzsche's criticism of metaphysics, which can be discerned, and yet which cannot be held as the main theme of this early work, belongs to a later period, say, to *Zarathustra*, in the form of a project of leaving metaphysics behind. Already in the preface written to *The Birth of Tragedy* in 1871, he defends his position as follows: «Art is the highest task and the truly metaphysical activity of man».

On the other hand, if one pays attention to the differences between the first preface of 1871 and the one Nietzsche wrote in 1886, one cannot fail to see that there had been immense changes that took place in Nietzsche's position with regard to metaphysics. The whole preface highlights those strains of thought which express not only Nietzsche's bitter criticism of himself concerning his discipleship of Wagner but also a fruitful confusion of mind concerning his consideration of Dionysos, the God, the metaphysical principle of art, and their relation to Being and active nihilism.

Now, I believe that if what Nietzsche aims in the aphorism, *Recapitulation: To impose upon becoming the character of being – that is the supreme will to power*, is taken as a literal application of being on becoming, the conclusion that Agamben reaches can be deduced from *The Birth of Tragedy* – a conclusion which transforms Nietzsche's thought, by way of looking for proofs, into "a thought of art", the ultimate point within the tradition of metaphysics of an attempt to forget poiesis: aestheticisation of life. However, and in fact, that is literally what Nietzsche is criticising in 1886 as the failure of his earlier thought.

But, my dear chap, where on earth are we to find romanticism if not in your book? Can that profound hatred of "contemporariness", "actuality", "modern ideas" be carried any farther than you have carried it in your aesthetic metaphysics – a metaphysics which would rather believe in nothingness, indeed in the devil himself, than in *the here and now* (my emphasis)? Do we not hear a ground bass of rage and destructive fury growl through all your ear beguiling contrapuntal art – a fierce hostility to everything that is happening today, an iron will (not far removed from *active nihilism* – (my emphasis) which seems to proclaim, "I'd rather that nothing were true than see you triumph and your truth?" Listen, you high priest of art and pessimism, to one of your own statements, that eloquent passage full of dragon killer's bravado and ratcatcher's tricks so appealing to innocent ears; listen to it and tell us, aren't we dealing here with the confession of a true romantic of the 1830's, disguised as a pessimist of the 1850's? Can't we hear behind your confession the annunciatory sounds of the usual romantic finale: rupture, collapse, return, and prostration before an old faith, before the old God ... Come now, isn't your pessimistic work itself a piece of anti-Hellenism and romantic moonshine, fit to 'befog and intoxicate", a kind of drug – in fact, a piece of music, and German music to boot? Just listen to this: Let us imagine a rising generation with undaunted eyes, with a heroic drive towards the unexplored; let us imagine the bold step of these St. Georges, their reckless pride as they turn their backs on all the valetudinarian doctrines of optimism, preparing to 'dwell resolutely in the fullness of being': would it not be necessary for the tragic individual of such a culture, readied by his discipline for every contingency, every terror, to want as his Helena a novel art of metaphysical solace and to exclaim as Faust did:

"And shall not I, by mightiest desire

In living shape that precious form acquire?"

“Would it not be necessary?” – no, indeed, my romantic fledglings, it would not be necessary. But it is quite possible that things – that you yourselves – might end that way: “metaphysically solaced” despite all your grueling self discipline and, as romantics usually do, in the bosom of the Church. (Nietzsche 1990: 13-14)

The active nihilism which Nietzsche is accusing himself of is the critique which he directed in Zarathustra to “The Higher Men”, in whom he traces a replacement of God with man. As Deleuze put it:

Nietzsche’s idea is that the death of god is a grand event, glamorous yet insufficient, for nihilism continues, barely changing its form. Earlier nihilism had meant depreciation, the negation of life in the name of higher values. But now the negation of these higher values is replaced by human values (...) Nothing has changed, for the same reactive life, the same slavery that had triumphed in the shadow of divine values now triumphs through human ones. (...) That is why Nietzsche, in book IV of Zarathustra, traces the great misery of those he calls “the higher men”. These men want to replace God: they carry human values; they even believe they are rediscovering reality, recuperating the meaning of affirmation. (Deleuze 2001: 80-81)

For one thing, it is obvious that Nietzsche realises in 1886 preface that he committed such a replacement and therefore his position in *The Birth of Tragedy* with regard to God carries the risk of enthroning such higher values in the spirit of Romanticism, in the form of «rupture, collapse, return, and prostration before an old faith, before the old God...» Furthermore, in the chapter VI of 1886 preface, we read Nietzsche complaining about another failure in terms of an application:

And yet there remains the great Dionysiac question mark, intact, apart from all those rash hopes, *those wrong applications* (my emphasis) to contemporary matters, which tended to spoil my first book; remains even with regard to music. For the question here is (and must continue to be), What should a music look like which is no longer romantic in inspiration, like the German, but Dionysiac instead? (Nietzsche 1990: 13)

What Nietzsche criticises here «as those wrong applications» was to apply what passed for him initially as the principles of tragic art to Wagner’s music. Romanticism, as he understands years later, was «rupture, collapse, return, and prostration before an old faith, before the old God». This is actually the god of nothingness that is replaced by the old god by an active nihilism and, «the truly metaphysical activity of man» that Nietzsche claimed in the 1871 preface is now depreciated as «aesthetic metaphysics – a metaphysics which would rather believe in nothingness, indeed in the devil himself, than in the here and now?»

What is Nietzsche proposing here as a kind of metaphysics which has a belief “in the here and now”? A critique of application, not simply of what passes for the old to the new,

but a critique of application as that which can be *applicable*? If this is so, can we discern in this belief “in the here and now” an intention to cast a light on Nietzsche’s critique of “fullness of being”? And does Nietzsche have a name for that? It seems like the name Dionysos, which he employed in order to oppose it to morality, metaphysics, the Christian God and the Western art, does not suffice anymore when Nietzsche realises what underlines his position: active nihilism, application of the old to the new, replacement. What he does then upon this realisation – upon a new critique of “fullness of being” which he depreciates as unnecessary – is to confess:

Thus it happened that in those days, with this problem book, my vital instincts turned against ethics and founded a radical counter doctrine, slanted aesthetically, to oppose the Christian libel on life. But it still wanted a name. Being a philologist, that is to say a man of words, I christened it rather arbitrarily – for who can tell the real name of the Antichrist? – with the name of a Greek god, Dionysos. (Nietzsche 1990: 11)

In the first place, in the late preface, Nietzsche had realised that that which reveals itself as a question of name in fact is a question of Being, a question of full being, which he supposed to fully embody itself in the name of Dionysos but it was a replacement, an application, of the old being to the new one, which he now opposes with “here and now”. Now the way Nietzsche realises this in the later preface takes the form of a criticism of Being, or basically the philosophy of Being, which polluted the way he produced a criticism of metaphysics: from *The Birth of Tragedy*, to *Zarathustra* and to *Will to Power*, Nietzsche realises that what he had been critical of – Being – cannot be maintained with an absolute rejection of Being and without the introduction into his thought the idea of “eternal recurrence” – that is, Becoming. Given these circumstances, I think, one is faced with preferences when one considers this quotation from Nietzsche: «Recapitulation: To impose upon becoming the character of being – that is the supreme will to power». The question is twofold: Is one supposed to replace Being with Becoming according to Nietzsche? Or, is there another, possible way of negotiating such an imposition?

Tympan

Philosophy has always insisted upon this: thinking its other. Its other: that which limits it, and from which it derives its essence, its definition, its production. To think its other: does this amount solely to relever (*aufheben*) that from which it derives, to head the procession of its method only by passing the limit? Or indeed does the limit, obliquely, by surprise, always reserve one more blow for philosophical knowledge? (Derrida 1982: x-xi)

What I would like to point at here is what is implicitly proposed and missed by Agamben's criticism. For this purpose what I offer is to read Derrida's essay *Tympan* (Derrida 1982) with the intention of opening a discussion on inside/outside opposition and "resonance" – the type of "resonance" which is proposed and missed by Agamben.

Following the line of thought quoted above, Derrida elaborates the Hegelian move, *Aufhebung* as an insistence «upon thinking its other: its proper other, the proper of its other. (...) In thinking it *as such*, in recognizing it» he writes, «one misses it. One reappropriates it for oneself, one disposes of it, one misses it, or rather one misses (the) missing (of) it» (Derrida 1982: xi). Furthermore, using tympanum as a metaphor for the limit between inside and outside, Derrida raises the following questions with a concern for the possibility of a resonance between inside and outside which would give way to a vibration on a punctured tympanum:

Can one violently penetrate philosophy's field of listening without its immediately – even pretending in advance, by hearing what is said of it, by decoding the statement – making the penetration resonate within itself, appropriating the emission for itself, familiarly communicating it to itself between the inner and middle ear, following the path of a tube or inner opening, be it round or oval? In other words, can one puncture the tympanum of a philosopher and still be heard and understood by him? (Derrida 1982: xii)

Derrida does not say it but what the philosopher would hear – when no inside/outside hierarchy left and the tympanum is punctured – would be a mixture of vibration and distortion can be obtained by way of underlining the missed opportunity by Agamben. We have already said that what is implicitly proposed but missed by Agamben, or better, in Derrida's terms, what Agamben "misses the missing of" in this matter is the possibility of preserving an already punctured tympanum punctured: this is a situation when resonance is no more understood in the hierarchical order of an inside and outside, but as what comes to itself as a distorted (failed?) rhythm produced on the punctured tympanum as a result of bodies on both sides already atotopologically in resonance in themselves and with each other. That when the tympanum is punctured it will yield to distortion and hence it will put the audibility of "the proper", "the authentic", "the presence", "the Being" at stake can be furthermore questioned within the question of the thought and the unthought or, better, since it would suit the context, the question of the audibility and the inaudibility of rhythm in Agamben, and, not without Heideggerian reverberations.

Nietzsche


Despite falling into Platonic traps now and then, Nietzsche dedicated all his life to an investigation of Heraclitan flow, fluidity, becoming and rhythm. Be it in the form of a critique of space or time, even from his earlier fragments and first book on to his latest aphorisms, Nietzsche exhibited a fierce interest in researching how the Pre-Socratic philosophers conceived rhythm because the latter once discovered would endow him with a key to sweep metaphysics from thought once and for all (Michon 2018b: 227-350) by keeping at bay the confusing question of “application”. Now having seen the basic differences between his 1871 and 1886 prefaces to *The Birth of Tragedy* as to the nature of being and becoming which is tremendously important in his strife of excavating a new concept of *rhuthmos* that owes a lot to pre-Socratic thought, there remains still one last move to be mentioned which actually bears witness to how the philosopher reconsidered Atomism to re-evaluate *rhuthmos* not from a spatial but a temporal point of view. It is all the more interesting because this move takes place long before 1886 and right after *The Birth of Tragedy* (1871) and *Philosophy in the Tragic Age of the Greeks* (1873) (Nietzsche 1996).

But before this let us briefly try to remember that for the Nietzsche of *The Birth of Tragedy* what's wrong with the Apollonian art of the rational man is that we do not hear the tremblings of Dionysian art in it anymore. Inaudibility of the Dionysian *rhuthmos* which put at stake the Apollonian form was based on the preservation of duality of forces without yielding to the preponderance of the one over the other, without a Hegelian synthesis or *aufhebung*. Yet after the Tragic age, that is, after Sophocles and Aeschylus, when everything gravitated to the Apollonian interest of form, the forces of Individuation and –dividuation which had equal weight in maintaining the Tragic collapsed to the benefit of individuation. It was this oscillation between individuation and –dividuation via a Pre-Socratic concept of *rhuthmos* which determined the political for Nietzsche at the time: of the here and now.

As those fragments, *Time-atoms Theory* (Michon 2018b: 272-282) from 1873 bear witness to, Nietzsche elaborated also another route so as to produce a critique of metaphysics. It assumed the form of temporalising the spatial which was the starting point of Democritus's atomism. The aim was manifold: if space constitutes the basis of metaphysics by means of temporalising the point as a result of which time becomes the sole reference in the construction of cosmos *as such*, is it possible to reduce the extensions of points down to One Point so that the cosmos becomes what it is not by extension but by the rhythmic movement of points? One in many and many in one. This would entail not only a complete atotology because in such a universe time would be rendered discontinuous (that it wouldn't be theorised as a *succession of points* any more) but also that each point would have a temporality of its own, that is, each point would be the reconstruction of a temporality anew each time, say, as in the movement of Lucretian “clinamen”. Such a framework would undoubtedly put at risk metaphysics as the founding principle of

thought because it would cut across any definition of movement or rhythm as a function of a priori condition of not only a continuous space but also a continuous time as well.

Such an understanding of rhythm – completely different from Plato's which is marked by the sole imperative of *bildung* – would not be chaotic but not following an order either. If Wagner's music was a failure for later Nietzsche, it was because it did not echo the Tragic but was a pale simulation of it as it was based on the preponderance of language over music which for Nietzsche meant the overdetermination of rhythm or form by grammar, that is, topological grounding. In contrast, in *Time-atoms Theory*, form would be attained only in passing just as a flow of shapes as it was in Pre-Socratic philosophy and it was the closest that Nietzsche could get to ancient Greek concept of *rhuthmos*. Furthermore, as the tympanum between the inside and the outside punctured, *rhuthmos* would be like the murmuration of starlings in the sky where constant change of time-points would not be calculated by a Platonic notion of rhythm and any concern for *alethia* would be completely and atotopologically invested on becoming.

<p>Timeline.</p> <p>Real: a space-point.</p> <p>Relations of its different time-positions.</p> <p>Where do the relations exist.</p> <p>No movement in time is steady.</p>		<p>We measure time against something remaining spatial and therefore presuppose that there is a steady time between time-point A and time-point B.</p> <p>But time is no continuum at all, there are only totally different time-points, no line. Actio in distans.</p>
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Source: [Diethe and Pearson 2000]

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