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## Introduction

### Rhythm in Social Interaction

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*But, friend, when you grasp the number and nature of the intervals of sound, from high to low, and the boundaries of those intervals, and how many scales arise from them, which those who came before handed down to us, their followers, to call «harmonies,» and when you grasp the various qualities inhering in the motions of the body, which they said must be measured with numbers and named «rhythm» and «metre,» and when you apprehend that every One and Many should be so investigated, when you have grasped all of that, then  
you are wise...*

Plato, *Philebus*, 17c11-e1

The focus this special issue is the *microanalysis* of rhythm in social interaction. When people walk together they mark together the rhythm of their walking; similarly, when people converse, their talking, gesturing, moving, and, in general, their inter-acting show rhythmic properties. We are convinced that such properties are of utmost *social* relevance. The four articles in this special issue are based on some of the contributions given at the panel «Rhythm in social interaction: some detailed aspects of action-in-interaction» of the 5th Ethnography and Qualitative Research Conference, held in June 2014 at the University of Bergamo, Italy. In this introduction, we shall position the special issue within the multidisciplinary field of rhythm studies, to highlight the micro-sociological, interactionist approach that we adopt here —an approach devoted to the minute, situated details of rhythmic experience, more than to cultural and/or socio-historical processes, but still focused on preeminently soci(ologic)al and interactional issues, differently than, for instance, studies in musicology or the arts. We shall then present the (multifaceted) common thread underlying all the articles —*i.e.*, the aesthetic dimension of rhythm—, its manifold layers, and the ways in which the various contributions of this issue address them. Finally, we shall argue that the analysis of the aesthetics of rhythm in interaction allows to understand the fundamental social functions it plays, *in primis* as a tool for social order\*. On the other hand, from a methodological point of view, we shall present rhythm as an important yet often overseen tool of the social analyst's box.

The pervasiveness of rhythm in human and social life has been noticed by various studies in humanities and social sciences. Classically, one of the most comprehensive account has been given by Lefebvre (2004), whose focus was mainly on complex collective rhythms such as those of the city, of the (temporalised) urban space (cf. also De Certeau, 1984, ch. 7 especially) —now a research field in itself (e.g., May, Thrift, 2001). This represents the macro/meso level of analysis of rhythmic phenomena, the focus being on the role of rhythm in what Goffman (1963) would have defined as unfocused interaction. Considering instead focused interaction, the relevance of rhythm has been underlined with respect to collective activities such as dancing or marching together, and in general concerning rituals —religious and not, like cheering at a sport event (e.g., McNeill, 1995). The performative dimension is clearly pivotal in these cases, and deeply linked to cultural (re)production, as various sociological and anthropological studies underlined (e.g. Chernoff, 1979, 2009; Berliner,

2006; Faulkner, 2006; Seye, 2014)<sup>1</sup>. More generally, rhythm has been found «essential to human activities such as physical labour» (Hamilton, 2011, p. 25). From earlier studies on industrial capitalism and Taylorism (e.g., Thompson, 1967; Ditton, 1979; Landes, 1983), to more recent ones on organizational life, rhythm and tempo have been considered crucial to the (changing) organization and accomplishment of work activities (as a recent example, think for instance to Fine's (1996, ch. 2) kitchens ethnography).

In these scholarly works, the relevance of rhythm was conceived in terms of mutual coordination, emotional involvement and social bonding, with highlighted consequences for both joint action and socialization. It is in these same terms that classical sociological analysis framed the collective experience of rhythm(ic movement), as capable of building a sense of togetherness and, by this way, solidarity. Durkheim's (1995) notion of «collective effervescence» is clearly pivotal here, but one could also cite the Schutzian (1970) «We-relationship», established in a «vivid present» shared by participants. More recently, Randall Collins, whose Durkheimian roots are well known, made a strong case for humans to be «hard-wired to get caught in a mutual focus of intersubjective attention and to resonate emotions from one body to another in common rhythms» (2008, p. 27; cf. also 2004).

Lefebvre did not miss the relevance of the micro level. He pointed out, for instance, that many biological phenomena are rhythmic in themselves, as heartbeat or breath<sup>2</sup>, and that our perception and use of rhythm is grounded in our embodiment (a Merleau-Pontyan departure point, one could say). «Rational, numerical, quantitative and qualitative rhythms superimpose themselves on the multiple natural rhythms of the body (respiration, the heart, hunger and thirst, etc.), though not without changing them» (Lefebvre, 2004, p. 9). Similarly, when giving his «dynamic account of rhythm», Hamilton connects rhythm to the human body and defines it as «order within human bodily movement» (2011, p. 27). McNeill (1995) as well, despite the broader historical and political grounding, frames his analysis in terms of *muscular* bonding.

Indeed, bodily rhythms must be considered not just from an individual, internal point of view, but also from an interpersonal perspective. At this level of analysis, the most basic consideration is perhaps that, if we all have a body that has its own rhythms and produces particular rhythms (e.g., movement), then such rhythms are also influenced by the bodily rhythms of our fellow human beings. «Each person brings their own internal rhythm into the presence of the other with the physicality of their body and voice (heartbeat, breath, speech), and in that presence is embodied the potential for rhythmic coordination» (Gill, 2012, p. 119). A stream of studies operating within an experimental framework focuses precisely on the physiological and neurological changes that occur in humans when they interact (e.g., Richardson *et al.*, 2007; Himberg, 2008, 2011). At an higher, more complex level of analysis, other studies ranging from neurosciences to music psychology, from ethnomusicology to kinesiology moved beyond a merely neuro-biological perspective to adopt a psycho-social one. Often working within an interdisciplinary framework, their main interest rests on interpersonal coordination (e.g., Fuchs, Jirsa, 2008; Lang *et al.*, 2015), mutual synchronization (e.g., Repp, 2005; Miles *et al.*, 2009) and entrainment (e.g., Clayton *et al.*, 2004; Bispham, 2006; Gill, 2007). These phenomena have been related to both physical and emotional well-being (e.g., Condon, Ogston, 1966; Rabinowitch *et al.*, 2011), to social

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<sup>1</sup> Also consider, more generally, so-called Performance Studies.

<sup>2</sup> Schutz (2013) identifies a distinction between the (experience of the) two.

bonding and affiliation (e.g., Miall, Dissanayake, 2003; Hove, Risen, 2009; Marsh *et al.*, 2009; Lang *et al.*, 2015), to prosocial behavior and shared intentionality (e.g., Kirschner, Tommasello, 2009; Kokal *et al.*, 2011; Reddish *et al.*, 2013), and to sociality and socialization at large (e.g., Cross, 2006, 2008).

Building on the above mentioned works but taking an interactionist perspective and considering micro-analytical studies in embodied face-to-face communication, some scholars focused on the communicative «functions» of rhythm and its role in mutual understanding and sensemaking. That is, they moved beyond both the individual and the interpersonal, towards the truly social. This was firstly pursued through the analysis of talk in interaction, by focusing on phonetics, prosody, and other timing aspects in turn-taking (e.g. Auer *et al.*, 1999; Local, 2003, 2007; Local, Walker, 2004; Levinson, Torreira, 2015). Far less studies, however, focused on the rhythmical aspects of the nonverbal components of social interaction, such as gesture, proxemics and more generally movement (some exceptions are: Condon, Sander, 1974; Hall, 1983; Gill *et al.*, 2000; Koch, 2014), which are yet crucial. This is particularly true with respect to the «problem of meaning» and that preeminently social activity which is sensemaking. In fact, given their polysemy and ambiguity, given «their underdetermination, their lack of codification, gesture [and other nonverbal expressions] contain more potency. [... This], on the other hand, does not at all mean lack of affectivity (indeed, the affective and the meaningful entertain a complex, non linear relation)» (Brighenti, 2015).

The signifying potency of embodied conduct and its rhythmical aspects holds for face-to-face ordinary conversations (jointly-focused interactions, Kendon, 1988) and everyday performances in the public space (common-focused and unfocused interactions) as well as in terms of extra-ordinary performances, such as theatrical ones, and cultural (re)production at large. In all these situations, the social character of the body and its rhythmical doings must be recognized, and the classical nature/culture dichotomous distinction must be avoided. As Michon (2010) notices,

the human body is not a machine made of tendons, of flesh and bones. It is, in the first place, as Mauss said, an assemblage of body techniques, that is, of «assemblies of acts», of «selections of pauses and movements», of «ensembles of forms of rest and action», in brief, a spatio-temporal organization. Individuation, therefore, is not produced starting from bodies that are simply given by nature, but through the technical elaboration of specific bodily rhythms.

By leveraging on the micro-analytical interactionist studies previously mentioned but attempting at broadening the perspective in terms of nonverbal and nonconceptual expression, this special issue aims to illustrate the role of rhythm in the interactional construction of local social meanings, in both ordinary and extra-ordinary situations/performances.

The aesthetic dimension of rhythm emerges as one of the deep themes that connects all the works here presented. From its coinage in the seventeenth century until the present day aesthetics has been seen not only as a discipline regarding art. Baumgarten's (1750) *Aesthetica*, recognized to be the first work in which the term «aesthetics» appears, takes into consideration the relevant meanings of aesthetics not just as a theory of beauty, but also as a theory of sensibility (*aisthēsis*) or perception (Gregor, 1983). This polysemy of the aesthetics is still reflected in nowadays academic debate (Shusterman, 2006). Finally, in the last century, aesthetics has been seen more and more as a discipline which is interlinked with

phenomenology, so that the philosophical interrogation about the intentional dimension of everyday life meets with the sensuous, the imaginative, and the creative dimension (Sepp, Embree, 2010). It is obviously not the task of an introduction to assess the field of enquiry of aesthetics, we can just point out that these four different and deeply interconnected notions of aesthetics as theory of *art*, of *beauty*, of *sensibility*, and of the *phenomenal world* play a role in the works we are presenting here, and this allows to glimpse the magnitude of the social function of rhythm.

*Art.* Many of the analysis presented in this special issue are concerned with performative arts, with the question of rhythm, music and movement. In their microanalysis of dance, Albert, Bassetti, and Muntanyola all present the aesthetic dimension of rhythm as a guiding artful practice (Garfinkel, 1967). Muntanyola and Bassetti, who analyse theatrical dance, are more interested on the backstage dimension, whereas Albert, who analyses improvised Lindy hop competitions, focuses on rhythm as a crucial element in dancing together onstage, and looks also at the performers-audience interaction.

According to Albert, who emphasizes the aesthetic question in its normative, practical functions, there is «an empirical distinction between choreographed and improvised movements» based on «the ways participants deal with variations in the projectability and contingencies of upcoming movements». The dialectics between partner dancers and audience members in their rhythmical moving together during a performance is also central: the pattern of disruption and re-coordination of audience members' rhythmical involvement plays a determinant role in the understanding of the improvisational practice. Muntanyola is looking to find in the collective experience of rhythm some insight on the link between conversation, dance —partnering in particular— and improvisation/creation. In her cognitive ethnography of a neoclassical top class European company, disruption has a role as well, being her analysis focused on the «Making» of a trio when a step goes wrong and communication among partners seems to fail. According to Muntanyola, rhythm is in partnering<sup>3</sup>. This dimension is considered in what is learnt in the rehearsals and embodied as the company habitus to reach a result within the set conditions of artistic quality. Rhythm in dance rehearsals is a product of the company habitus, embodied by both the choreographer and the dancers, and transmitted through a specific mode of instruction that Muntanyola calls «impregnation model».

Our own contribution is based on two ethnographic researches. The first one (we shall consider the second one further on) regards two Italian modern and contemporary dance companies. The general aim of the paper is to give a theoretical and empirical contribution on rhythm with respect to its role in the situated interactional «management» of power relations. This is done by adapting the Weberian notion of charisma to the realm of micro-interaction, and connecting it to the dialectics between conceptual and nonconceptual aspects of both interaction and rhythm. We show how dance rehearsals are about to «find», through repeated collective practice, and to «take», to embody an isorhythmic coordination with fellow dancers. Moreover, we consider dance rehearsals as a cooperative activity oriented to an artwork, and we argue that in this context the most prominent authority is conceptual and, in weberian terms, bureaucratic, because it is the teacher/choreographer the one who is institutionally invested of the knowledge on what counts as proper enactment. At the same time, we show how, to fulfill such an institutional role, that is, in the attempt to instruct

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<sup>3</sup> Something similar has been recently noticed by Sparti (2015) in his analysis of tango.

dancers to enact the *correct* rhythmical movement, the choreographer makes use of nonconceptual means (e.g., vocables and prosody), and how this affects the conceptual level.

*Beauty.* The nature of beauty is, as we said, one of the most fundamental issues through the history of aesthetics. Philosophers have often focused their attention on beauty as a subject, much less on the role beauty plays in their thinking and in their debates. In philosophers' debates, the focus is clearly on arguments, on truth, on reason, and often on who is the one winning these arguments. Beauty of Plato's dialogues is among the most cited examples in the history of philosophy. We could point as an exception that recently some believe to have uncovered some of its traits, where a deep musical orchestration of Plato's prose is revealed, in which rhythm has a predominant role and it is linked to a complex network of symbols and allegories (Kennedy, 2011). Anyway, nobody has ever considered rhythm in philosophy *in vivo*.

Lieberman's ethnography of Tibetan philosopher-monks' public debates fills this gap and reflects on the social significance of a well ordered and aesthetically pleasing communication among individuals. It gives a revolutionary view on the subtle relations among dialogue, beauty and rhythm in philosophy. This is done by looking in a different way at the role that logic plays between debaters. According to Lieberman, logic is an organizational device. Logic not only exerts a limit on what can be thinkable, but also coordinates thinking. More than this, logic is a *social* organizational device: «The formal analytic apparatus that is produced assists the philosophers' discussions by making public just what are their philosophical commitments». The connection between rhythm and logic relies on the way they organize their debate. For example, each time they complete a proposition they punctuate it with a handclap, or they have a specific hand slapping to mark that the opponent has fallen into a contradiction. Moreover, the overall debate has to have a quick pace, swift replies are required, and only many interactional tools, or artful practices, and a long training makes this possible. Tibetan debaters are well aware of this, for them being caught together rhythmically in interpersonal interaction is a source of pleasure difficult to resist. More than this, a well performed debate with its peculiar rhythm «can appear to operate apart from the debaters, as its own objectivated social fact. [...] When the rhythm is that entrenched, it seems [...] that the implication is that the truth itself, and not simply the debaters, is speaking».

*Sensibility.* Rhythm is a very elusive notion to define. In his monumental work, the *Cahiers*, Paul Valéry, highlights the excruciating difficulty of such an endeavour; after realizing that he produced or knew at least twenty definitions of rhythm, he concludes that he is disposed to adopt none (Valery, 1957, I, 1289). The situation is not very different nowadays. In philosophy, for example, especially in the analytic stream<sup>4</sup>, rhythm is so poorly considered that to find twenty definitions of rhythm to compare is impossible. This is perhaps not accidental, being rhythm linked, as we point out in this issue, to something that is in between the conceptual and nonconceptual sphere of human experience and understanding.

To have an intuition of this, consider some examples (given in Hamilton, 2011) of phenomena ranging from non rhythmic to rhythmic. On one extreme, as examples of *clearly non-rhythmic* events, we have a white noise or a continuous non varying tone; on the other extreme, as examples of *clearly rhythmic* events, we have music, dance, poetry. It is when we

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<sup>4</sup> Among the few we can list Scruton (1997, 2008), Dewey (1980), Cooper and Meyer (1960), and the already cited Hamilton (2011).

consider the mid of this scale, that is, when we consider, for example, a pulse with no variation, that the issue of human perception and sensibility is revealed in all its relevance. The mere regularity of an electronic pulse is not rhythmic in itself, it is dependent on our attitude to perceive it as *somewhat rhythmic*. In our article we recall Plato on this regard. In Plato's *Laws* is not rhythm, but the *sense* of rhythm that is a gift of the gods to the humankind, and it lies in the perception of the various kinds of orders and disorders in movement. We argue that if one accepts that perceptual content has an irreducible nonconceptual aspect, then one has also to accept that rhythm, being strictly dependent on perceptual content, has this nonconceptual aspect too. This is necessary if one has to *empirically* consider *how* this sensibility works in interaction. Dance practice is deeply intertwined with the social perception of the others, and rehearsals have a lot to do with it; to practice with others «is about to learn to feel them when co-inhabiting the same *aisthesis* with them».

Muntanyola considers this aspects of common perception, of attuned sensibility by emphasizing the notion of listening: «Listening to the right rhythm has a cognitive function that goes beyond communication. The negotiation that takes place when dancers create phrases with partners comes with a re-conceptualization of immediate prior social interaction (Goffman, 1974). This specific rhythmic sequence affords not only the communication of emotions or individual thoughts, but also the creation of shared cognitive representations. [...] Members of duets and trios not only move, but also think together. Dancers share moves towards an *optimal grip* of their environment (Dreyfus, 2010), feeling at ease with their bodies and that of others. This is a desirable outcome in the context of dance Making, since “feeling good” is one of the products of stable conditions of interaction. The sharing of perceptual information conveys a shared sense of agency.»

Liberman as well ends up talking about listening, and emphasizes the role of rhythm in conversation —i.e., in that activity which, like dancing together, is largely about knowing «just-how and just-when to fit in» one's contribution. «It is the objective of Tibetan public dialectics to orchestrate the mental flows of the contesting parties so that they can be conjoined into one, and this is a wondrous achievement. [...] Its accomplishment requires that Tibetan thinkers really hear each other; in this way what is aesthetically satisfying can also be good philosophizing. [...] W]hen a debate bears a seamless rhythm, each party will know just-how and just-when to fit in their contribution with the others' remarks. For that to happen, they must listen attentively, and good philosophizing happens when people are listening closely to what their partners are saying. [...] All of these are the local, interactional accomplishments of philosophers».

*Phenomenology.* According to Hamilton (2011) and to Scruton (1997), besides involving the perception of movement, rhythm has as its key component imagination. In order to perceive a rhythm one has to imagine what is perceived into a *form*. «We spontaneously project rhythm onto regular sounds; we perceive regularity and imaginatively impose rhythm» (Hamilton, 2011, p. 31). This notion of imagination has to be intended in its Kantian terms, being imagination, according to Kant, an essential component of perception. Imagination and perception are strongly intertwined in this view. In Husserlian terms, for example, they share the same content, while having different modes of presentation. That said, even if some phenomenologists have been interested in some of the basic questions related to rhythm, such as the notion of time (Husserl, 1991; Schutz, 1967) or the phenomenology of the body (Merleau-Ponty, 1945, 1964), little has being written in this field

on the notion of rhythm itself (exceptions are Schutz, 2013; Tiger, 2014) and, especially, on the social dimension of rhythmic experience.

Lieberman's article in this special issue evidently reflects his background, deep theoretical knowledge, and extended research experience in phenomenology, and yet successfully attempts to its (ethnomethodological) overcoming by focusing on the intersubjective alignment, rather than the subjective experience, of the philosopher-monks. Such an alignment —the cojoinment of the debaters' mental flows— is seen as the interactional accomplishment of Tibetan philosophers, in which rhythm plays a crucial role as an attuning tool and as a listening prompter. The fine-grained analysis that Lieberman is able to propose thanks to his chosen methods shows that «[t]he merit of rhythmically well-ordered debates lies not only in their beauty but also in the fact that a well constructed rhythm can provide orderliness to dialogue and facilitate the thinkers' capacity to really hear what each other is saying».

According to Muntanyola as well, phenomenology —at least with respect to the most restrictive understanding of it, that is the subjective perspective— needs to be overcome in order to understand the nature of artistic partnering. This has to be done by considering the phenomenological analysis of time, weness, and togetherness through the lenses of (micro)sociological notions such as focused interaction, artful practices, and habitus. She points out, for instance, that «[d]ancers ought to share various dimensions of outer and inner time, so that a relationship is established by the reciprocal sharing of the Other's flux of experiences in inner time. Partnering then would mean living through a vivid present together», and «flow in partnering is not necessarily a state of mind, but a state of being and doing. Or, in other words, listening to rhythm can be considered a state of mind if we skip the individual and confined idea of a Cartesian mind and jump into the broad perspective of embodied, extended, distributed and situated cognition».

Also Albert's analysis is deeply indebted with phenomenology, and especially with the phenomenology of time as developed by Schutz (1951). With a detailed analysis of the interaction among dancing dancers, on the one hand, and among dancers and audience, on the other hand, during an improvised partner dance performance, Albert gives an account of the nexus between the projectability resources used by the interactants —among which rhythm is central— and their apparent seamless coordination in action. As we already pointed out, to understand this nexus is also to see how impasses are worked out and repaired during the improvised joint enactment of dance steps (and other activities).

In our contribution we do not want to focus simply on the phenomenology of the body as well, but to consider the social phenomenology of bodies and persons —embodied subjects— taken in their complex dialectics, with an emphasis on power relations. In everyday life interactions there are always people that in common language are called charismatic, or there are moments when people possess charisma and exert seduction on others. Charisma is a well known notion in sociology, but surprisingly, it is not so much studied in its micro-interactionist implications. We consider the relation between rhythm and charisma by means of a philosophical investigation and an empirical microanalysis of the everyday interactions among a newborn, her parents and other members of their intimate circle (the second ethnographic research on which the article is based). Our finding, that shares some similarity with Lieberman's, is that rhythm makes the sense of objectivation of what is at stake in the interaction stronger. For us, this means that with rhythm it is possible to compel people and to exercise a power over them via the nonconceptual entrainment of the

interacting bodies at the perceptual and deeply associative level: «The one who gets the power to lead an interaction is the one who, by that very same ongoing achievement, changes others' situated belief. Charisma is the product-in-being-produced of social interaction, setting the rhythm of the latter equals seizing that micro-power».

Each of these different perspectives on the social aesthetics of rhythm point, in the very end, at two fundamental problems: that of intersubjectivity, and that of social order\*. Rhythm plays a crucial role in both of them, as a means of experiential sharing that enhances mutual coordination, listening and reciprocal understanding, and thereby as a powerful organization tool. Whether that of a philosophical debate, a dance rehearsal or an improvised ballroom performance, order\* does not rest only on institutional —bureaucratic— matters, not even if we consider them situatedly. Social order\* also rests on the manifold nonconceptual means we humans use —in the midst, and sometimes for the sake, of such bureaucratic, conceptual(isable) elements of social life— for the *local, interactional accomplishments* that punctuate our everyday life and its artful practices.

Dance rehearsals, for instance, are not only about correct/beautiful<sup>5</sup> rhythmical movement, but also, and precisely for the accomplishment of the former, about the rhythm of the interaction itself (Muntanyola) and of the talk within (Bassetti) —whereby both become in turn part of the company/class habitus, the «institutional habitus» (Wainwright *et al.*, 2006). Improvised Lindy hop performances, where the issue of projectability is pivotal, rely on conventions (steps and musical rhythms) as much as on the interactional deployment of rhythmical and bodily cues —and it is ultimately such an artful interaction that makes the success or failure of the performance, in terms of its placing in the competition but also of its pleurability for both the audience and the performers. Similarly, public philosophical debates are not merely about the correctness of logic, but also about its beauty and pleurability. Co-producing a good debate, and winning one, require mastering logical arguments as much as deploying such a knowledge in the rhythmical interaction with the other —logic must be made to dance. Even in more ordinary family situations, it is not always the case that the «bureaucratic authority» (e.g., the Mother) holds power at the situated level, since somebody else could practice interaction more artfully, somebody else could be more pleasurable, somebody else could gain situated status and power. In all these situations, sensemaking is clearly involved, and interactionally accomplished.

Reflecting on rhythm in its dialectic between the conceptual and the nonconceptual dimension of interaction is also a way to reflect on the notion of order\* and on its epistemological and ontological status. In our contribution we argue that conceptual interaction is intrinsically prone to misunderstanding. Our social concepts seem to be shared, but perhaps there is no way to assess that they actually are, and we are under a sort of «phenomenological illusion». Then, what is agreed, or believed to be agreed, or shared, explicitly or implicitly during an interaction? Perhaps what is actually shared is the emotive and action-laden part of the rhythmic experience of interaction: «[b]eing entrained in rhythm can always misguide us: sharing some rhythm at the nonconceptual level could make us think that we are also sharing the conceptual content of the interaction at hand. [...] The conceptual interaction we are experiencing is subjectively actual, but there is no easy and rationally justified way to determine that the content of this “conceptual experience” is actually shared among the interactants».

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<sup>5</sup> On the such an equivalence in the dance world see Bassetti (2009).



There are thence manifold ethnomethods, more or less community-specific, that we use everyday in social interaction to order the world and to accomplish our goals, in changing relative percentages of collaboration and competition, of converging and diverging goals. Rhythm is a fundamental element of such ethnomethods. However, it has been rarely put at the centre of the analysis. As a boundary object oscillating between order and disorder (Plato, cf. above), between the conceptual and the nonconceptual, rhythm seems to inhabit the realm of *what cannot be said*. This «cannot» has a twofold meaning but the issue is threefold. First, rhythm is difficult to define, and describing a rhythm by means of words only is a very difficult endeavor —rhythm is (almost) *impossible to be said*. Second, and conversely, rhythm is used in diverse artful practices to convey what words alone could not (e.g., the rhythmic talk of dance teaching, see Bassetti, Bottazzi); rhythm lives together with other things that are impossible to be said, and can be a means for their communication. Third, probably as a consequence of the above mentioned impossibility, rhythm holds a poor status as a legitimate element of accountability in social interaction: we are very rarely allowed to account for our decisions and conduct by explicitly referring to a rhythmical feature of the interaction we are recounting, and/or to (try to) describe it thoroughly and at length. Here rhythm is what *should not be said*.

This is reflected also in scientific research, where accounting for rhythmical aspects of interaction —or to use rhythm among the working tool of the analyst of action-in-interaction— is not only intrinsically difficult but often also considered illegitimate or worthless within the wider academic community. To us, however, rhythm can be one of the tools of the analyst, and if we put enough collective research effort, we will be able to discuss rhythmical aspects of social interaction like we now discuss a series of conversational features that we were able to sense but unable to name, think, and talk about before the studies in Conversation Analysis. If logic can be made to dance, then it should be possible for rhythm to be made to talk<sup>6</sup>. This special issue represents a contribution to this objective.

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<sup>6</sup> After all, Conversation Analysis has made even silence to talk.

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