



RHYTHMEASURE REVISITED. DURATION-NUMBER, MULTI-TIME SCALE THEORY, ETHICS OF *DÉMESURE* IN BERGSON'S PHILOSOPHY *

A medida-rítmica revisitada. Duração numérica, teoria da escala multi-temporal e ética da desproporcionalidade na filosofia de Bergson

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Abstract: Often illustrated with the examples of *melody*, Bergson's key concept of *durée* is best known for its qualitative, heterogeneous, and thus immeasurable multiplicity. However, the examples he gives in *Time and Free Will*—such as “the regular oscillations of a pendulum” or “the successive strokes of a distant bell”—suggest rather periodic phenomena that would require another perspective in terms of *rhythm*. When we “get into a rhythm,” we perceive a numerical quality without counting. Rhythm makes glimpse “Otherwise than Measuring”. Focusing on the “rhythmic organization of the whole” within duration could reveal the secret of Bergson's enigmatic phrase: “this heterogeneity contains number only potentially.” This paper reexamines the theoretical scope of *rhythmeasure* in two ways. First, it shows how this *image médiatrice* we forged is going to be renewed by recent studies emphasizing duration-number (Miravete) or multi-time scale theory (Hirai). Second, it explores the ethico-political implications of *rhythmeasure*. Bergson, in his last book *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, multiplies images of “a justice (...) which no longer evokes ideas of

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relativity and proportion, but, on the contrary, of the incommensurable and the absolute". The very ambiguity of *démesuré* revitalizes the famous opposition of "the closed/the open".

Keywords: Duration. Rhythm. Number. Ethics. *Démesure*.

Resumo: O conceito central de Bergson, a *duração*, por vezes ilustrada com exemplos de melodia, é mais conhecido por sua multiplicidade qualitativa, heterogênea e sobretudo não quantificável. No entanto, os exemplos acerca da duração apresentados no *Ensaio sobre os Dados Imediatos da Consciência* – tais como "a oscilação regular do pêndulo" ou "as sucessivas badaladas de um sino distante" – sugerem um fenômeno periódico que parece requerer uma outra perspectiva quanto ao *ritmo*. Quando nós "nos lançamos no ritmo", percebemos uma qualidade numérica sem qualquer contagem. O ritmo faz vislumbrar uma "outra forma de medida". Concentrar-se na "organização rítmica do todo" no interior da duração poderia revelar o segredo da enigmática frase de Bergson: "Esta heterogeneidade contém o número apenas potencialmente". Este artigo reexamina o âmbito teórico da *medida-rítmica* de duas maneiras. Primeiramente, mostra como esta *imagem mediadora* que forjamos é renovada pelos recentes estudos que enfatizam a duração numérica (Miravete) ou a teoria da escala multi-temporal (Hirai). Depois, serão exploradas as implicações ético-políticas da *medida-rítmica*. Em seu último livro, *As Duas Fontes da Moral e da Religião*, Bergson apresenta várias imagens de uma justiça "que não mais evoca ideias de relatividade ou proporção, mas, pelo contrário, de incomensurabilidade e de absoluto". Tenta-se então mostrar como a própria ambiguidade desta *desproporcionalidade* parece revitalizar a famosa oposição entre "o fechado e o aberto".

Palavras-chave: Duração. Ritmo. Número. Ética. *Démesure*.

To Débora Morato Pinto, who first listened to the germ of this paper in São Carlos in 2007. With heartfelt gratitude and friendship.

Introduction

In the Introduction (Part II) to *Creative Mind* (*La pensée et le mouvant*), Bergson stated that the duration of human beings and "what one might call the duration of things" are vastly different. What is particularly intriguing here is the assertion that the difference between these two rhythms can be "calculated"¹. How can the difference between the dura-

¹ BERGSON, H. *Creative Mind*. New York: Philosophical Library, 1946, p. 82: "two rhythms vastly different, calculated in such a way [*deux rythmes bien différents, calculés de telle manière*] that in the shortest perceptible interval of our time are contained trillions of oscillations or more generally of external events which repeat; this immense history that would take us hundreds of centuries to unfold, we apprehend in an indivisible synthesis."

tion of consciousness, often considered immeasurable, and the duration of things, described as countless vibrations, be measured? This paper aims to revisit the idea of *rhythmeasure* (*rythmesure* in French), which we proposed about twenty years ago, to gain a more precise understanding of Henri Bergson's notion of *durée*. By connecting this concept with recent studies exploring the relationship between these two durations, we seek to re-evaluate its value. In doing so, we hope to contribute to the Brazilian philosophical journal *Síntese's* endeavor to discern the new groove in *Creative Mind*, which marks its 90th anniversary this year since its publication in 1934.

1. What is *Rhythmeasure*?

It is often said that at the core of Bergson's philosophy lies the crucial distinction between duration and spatialized time: duration is lived time — qualitatively multiple and not quantitatively measurable — thus escaping the realm of space defined by quantification and measurement. Conversely, space, constituted of numerical multiplicity, represents what escapes duration. However, if this is the case, there must be some underlying movement between duration and space — a sort of differential mechanism that produces the irreducible differences between quality and quantity. To illustrate, consider the example of a car turning a corner. The inner and outer wheels travel different distances, requiring different rotational speeds. The device that accommodates this difference is known as the differential gear. Without this device, the wheels would rotate at the same speed, resulting in skidding or straight-line movement, as one of the tires would have to slip to accommodate the turn. Essentially, the differential gear allows the engine's power to be smoothly transmitted to the wheels while maintaining the necessary difference in speed, playing a crucial role in the car's ability to navigate corners smoothly.

We believe that something akin to a differential gear is at work within what is referred to as “the problem of space in Bergson.” In his renowned analysis, Worms highlights how Bergson directly tackled the issue of pure space as it is posed in transcendental aesthetics. By critiquing “what might be called Kant's three errors” — concerning the relationships between space and time, space and objects, and space and the subject of knowledge — in his works *Time and Free Will*, *Matter and Memory*, and *Creative Evolution*, respectively, Bergson carved out his own philosophical path. The problem of space, in a privileged way, exposes the “constant tension” that continually emerges and operates between dualism and monism across these works. The very displacement of the problem of space raises a new set of questions, and through this process, the “pivot” around which the entire

oeuvre revolves can perhaps be glimpsed². We contend that it is more precise to consider this as an issue of the relationship between duration-memory-élan vital, and space, rather than simply a “problem of space”.

1.1. Otherwise than Measuring

To further elucidate the dynamic relationship that forms the monism in dualism between duration and space — or, borrowing from Hiroshi Honda’s expression, the “de-dualisticalizing idea occasionally hinted at in *Time and Free Will*, which would be ordinarily seen as standing on a sharp dualism”³ — we focus on what plays a role akin to a differential gear. This involves two terms in Bergson’s works that, while not particularly prominent and possibly considered similar, actually operate on subtly different dimensions: rhythm and measure. In 2006, in our attempt to get to the bottom of the issue, we introduced the coined term *arythmétrologie*.

The concept of rhythm (...) reveals the deep nature of duration⁴. This is precisely through the numerical logic of rhythm. Is it necessary to recall the traditional fusion, at least since the Pythagoreans, between *rhuthmos* and *arithmos*, rhythmic and arithmetic, rhythm and number? On the other hand, what is at stake in the notion of measure, as it operates in Bergson’s differential of duration and space, is the gap, the interval, and the spacing that generate a new dimension, an opening (...). Thus, in Bergson, there is a unique arhythmology (and not simply an arithmology). (...) We will show what the Bergsonian *arithmetrology* produces: contrary to what is sometimes believed, it does not succumb to the temptation of systematically demonizing measure and space; by revealing the virtual numerality of the rhythm of duration, it continually re-elaborates the notions of measure and space⁵.

The concept of rhythm, of course, extends beyond the musical dimension. The idea of periodic vibration encompasses two independent notions: the repetition of the same event over time and the emergence of new events over time. The term *rhythm*, derived from *ῥυθμός* (*rythmós*), oscillates between Heraclitus’s mythical *panta rhei* and Plato’s classical definition *kineseos taxis* (*Laws*, 665a). This vacillation occurs between a *dynamic axis of flow and movement*, which disrupts the current rigid order and leans

² WORMS, F. “Les trois dimensions de la question de l’espace dans l’œuvre de Bergson”, in *Epokhè*, n. 4 (1994), Paris: Éditions Jérôme Millon, p. 116.

³ HONDA, H. *Space, Extension, Matter in Bergson’s Philosophy*. Kyoto: Koyo Shobo, 2009, p. 68.

⁴ For the philosophical problematisation of rhythm, see Pierre Sauvanet’s seminal work: SAUVANET, P. *Le Rythme et la raison*. Tome I: *Rythmologiques*, Tome II: *Rythmanalyses*, Paris: Éditions Kimé, 2000.

⁵ FUJITA, H. “La question du rythme et de la mesure dans la philosophie de Bergson”, in *Études de langue et littérature françaises*, vol. 89 (2006), Tokyo: Société japonaise de Langue et Littérature françaises, p. 75.

towards chaos, and a *static axis of formation and structure*, which continually reorganizes and maintains new order from chaos. From *numerus* in Augustine's theory of music—arising from the fateful confusion between *rhuthmos* and *arithmos*—to the German Romantic *Rhythmus*, Kierkegaard's *Gjentagelsen* (repetition), Nietzsche's *ewige Wiederkunft* (eternal return), Freud's *Wiederholungszwang* (repetition compulsion), and Deleuze-Guattari's *ritornello*, the issues of periodicity and movement, difference and repetition, structure and force raised by the concept of rhythm have been continually proliferating.

In this huge history of the philosophy of rhythm, Bergson's name is rarely heard. While we must demonstrate throughout this paper why it is beneficial to take Bergson into consideration in this *gigantomachia* of rhythm, there is one point I would like to emphasize here. It is the fact that philosophers of rhythm have typically contrasted rhythm with meter⁶. What we consider the most decisive feature of Bergsonian rhythm is its inseparability with meter (*mesure*), while these two concepts are usually viewed as opposites⁷. Étienne Balibar once proposed the neologism equaliberty (*égaliberté*) to demonstrate the inseparability of equality (*égalité*) and liberty (*liberté*)⁸; we proposed the neologism *rhythmeasure* in the same spirit⁹.

However, just like rhythm, the notion of *measure* is not merely a musical tempo. Derived from *mensura* and μέτρον (*métron*), this term not only signifies units or measures to be calculated but also encompasses the act of measuring or calculating, and through spatial extension, ultimately relates to the ethical concept of *openness* itself. Heidegger stated in his lecture on Heraclitus: "The fundamental meaning of μέτρον, and thus its very essence, is the expanse, the open, the sprawling and widening clearing"¹⁰.

⁶ Deleuze and Guattari are typical in this regard: "It is well known that rhythm is not meter or cadence, even irregular meter or cadence. (...) Meter, whether regular or not, assumes a coded form whose unit of measure may vary, but in a noncommunicating milieu, whereas rhythm is the Unequal or the Incommensurable that is always undergoing transcoding. Meter is dogmatic, but rhythm is critical" (DELEUZE, G. and GUATTARI, F. *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987, p. 313).

⁷ Émile Benveniste talks about Plato's "innovation" on this issue: "The decisive circumstance is there, in the notion of a corporal ῥυθμός [*rythmós*] ; associated with μέτρον [*métron*] and bound by the law of numbers: that "form" is from then on determined by a "measure" and numerically regulated" (BENVENISTE, É. "The Notion of "Rhythm" in its Linguistic Expression." In: *Problems in General Linguistics*. Miami: University of Miami Press, 1971, p. 287). As we will see later, especially through the concept of "*démesure*," we argue that the relationship between the two (ῥυθμός and μέτρον) in Bergson's works is much more dynamic.

⁸ BALIBAR, É. *Equaliberty: Political Essays*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2014.

⁹ See the entire first part (Rythmesure de la durée, ou Comment mesurer l'immesurable? Une lecture de l'Essai sur les données immédiates de la conscience (1889)) of my doctoral dissertation : FUJITA, H. *La logique mineure dans l'oeuvre de Bergson. Pour un vitalisme (non-)organique* (2007).

¹⁰ HEIDEGGER, M. *Heraclitus. The Inception of Occidental Thinking and Logic: Heraclitus's Doctrine of the Logos*. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2018, p. 128.

In short, it seems that in Bergson's work, there is a move of rendering the numerical and rational qualities into rhythm, as well as a move of restoring the dynamism and openness into measure. What we are trying to convey with this bizarre term *rhythmmeasure* is, in a sense, quite simple. When we get into rhythm, we indeed feel a certain numerical quality internally. We do not perceive it as a flat, amorphous mass of sounds. However, if we focus too much on counting and measuring from the outside, the "number" felt from within fades along with the sense of rhythm, eventually disappearing. In Bergson's own words, on the one hand, there is an approach to sound where "I do not count the sounds, I limit myself to gathering, so to speak, the qualitative impression produced by the whole series"¹¹. On the other hand, there is another approach where "I intend explicitly to count them, and then I shall have to separate them, and this separation must take place within some homogeneous medium in which the sounds, stripped of their qualities, and in a manner emptied"¹².

While it is possible to create rhythm mechanically with a rhythm machine, it is not the same as the rhythm that stirs us from within, making our bodies itch with anticipation. The same is true within the brain. Michael Thaut, a leading researcher in the neuroscience of music who drives Neurologic Music Therapy (NMT), states:

The perception of rhythm and formation of rhythm may be biologically based more on the entrainment of oscillatory circuits in the brain than on actual acts of measurement in terms of timekeepers that are often conceptualized and modeled as clocks, pulse counters, or stopwatches in the brain¹³.

When we feel the groove, we find ourselves immersed in something larger than ourselves, as if freed from our own individual boundaries. In Bergson's last major work, *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*¹⁴, a new differential gear, created by the interaction between the closed (*le clos*) and the open (*l'ouvert*), begins to operate. *Rhythmmeasure* is not a rejection of measurement but rather a critique, a conceptual reimagining. It could be said, with a nod to Levinas' second major work *Otherwise than Being (Autrement qu'être)*, *Otherwise than measuring (Autrement que mesurer)*. This is because rhythm and measurement are not only related to time, memory, and life but also to the ethico-political register. Exploring all these dimensions could delve into the deepest spheres of Bergson's philosophy.

¹¹ BERGSON, H. *Time and Free Will*. London: Allen & Unwin, 1912, p. 86.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 87.

¹³ THAUT, M. *Rhythm, Music, and the Brain: Scientific Foundations and Clinical Applications*. London: Routledge, 2005, p. 6; Cf. *Ibid.*, p. 7: "As such, periodicities of rhythms would be determined not by the measurement of discontinuous time elements, but by categorical entrainment of intervalbased time modules, coded in the neural firing rates of the auditory system and projected into other resonant brain tissue."

¹⁴ BERGSON, H. *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*. Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 1977.

1.2 “What the Philosophy of Rhythm Owes to Bergson” (Masakazu Yamazaki)

In the second chapter, “Rhythm and Duration,” of Masakazu Yamazaki’s final work, *Notes on the Philosophy of Rhythm*¹⁵, two philosophers of life, Ludwig Klages and Henri Bergson, are discussed. For Yamazaki, who sought the substance of the “articulated continuity” (*gegliederte Stetigkeit*) that Klages only mentioned as the essence of rhythm in Bergson’s concept of “pure duration,” the crucial question is, “Is there structure in pure duration?”: “The most suggestive passage is when Bergson compares pure duration to a musical melody [in *Time and Free Will*, Chapter 2]. At the very moment when his explanation succeeds magnificently, a serious doubt arises in our minds”¹⁶.

As Bergson rightly points out, people are moved by a melody not simply because the sounds are arranged in a sequence, but because the preceding and succeeding sounds blend together to create a qualitative state. The observation that when a single note in a melody is mistakenly prolonged, what people feel is not a change in the length (quantity) of the sound but a qualitative abnormality in the musical expression itself would resonate strongly with music lovers¹⁷. However, Yamazaki raises a question: “Immediately following this sense of empathy, a doubt arises about how the beauty of a melody differs from the beauty of a harmony”¹⁸. Since pleasant harmony is formed vertically, it could be argued that it achieves a higher degree of fusion than a melody formed horizontally, realizing a pure, qualitative mass.

Yamazaki continues: “Should we then reinterpret Bergson’s definition of pure duration as being more suited to harmony, which continues infinitely without breaks, making harmony the typical example of pure duration?”¹⁹ Of course, it goes without saying that Bergson distinguishes between preceding and succeeding sounds and calls the unique blending of these two a melody. Yamazaki warns us not to overlook the fact that while Bergson emphasizes the “absence of separation” between sounds, he consistently uses the term “succession”. How can such succession occur without separation, and how do different sounds blend while remaining distinct? Yamazaki concludes:

Bergson’s explanation, which elucidates this delicate point, is indeed suggestive. In just one line, he unmistakably points out the fact that within a melody, there is a reversal of the semantic order of sounds, and people

¹⁵ YAMAZAKI, M. *Notes on the Philosophy of Rhythm*. Tokyo: Chuokoron-Shinsha, 2018.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

¹⁷ BERGSON, *Time and Free Will*, p. 100.

¹⁸ YAMAZAKI, M. *Notes on the Philosophy of Rhythm*, p. 51.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

“hear the preceding sound in the succeeding sound.” (...) Perhaps, while intending to explain pure duration, he was, unconsciously, speaking about rhythm from the beginning²⁰.

In the traditional Japanese performances like *Nô* or *Gagaku*, the “jo” (opening) is given its true meaning and function only when followed by the “ha” (middle), and “ha” is given meaning by the subsequent “kyu” (climax). Through the passage of time, the successive coexistence of multiple sounds and the retroactive and holistic attribution of meaning, “jo-ha-kyu” is structured as such. And it is not the role of melody, but of rhythm, to perform such structuring. In the section titled “What Rhythm Theory Owes to Bergson” which concludes the chapter “Rhythm and Duration”, Yamazaki says: “It seems to me that Bergson came very close to discussing the philosophy of rhythm, or at least to allowing it, in a very understated manner”²¹. It is a truly insightful observation.

So far, we have explored the benefits of considering Bergson within the context of the philosophy of rhythm. Though it may sound ambitious, our ultimate aim from this perspective is to challenge the superiority of rhythm (*rythme*) over meter (*mesure*) in the history of the philosophy of rhythm through this quasi-concept of *rhythmeasure*. By doing so, we hope to contribute to the global evolution of the philosophy of rhythm.

2. Melody, or Organic Totality (contractive succession)

Now, conversely, what could a focus on rhythm bring to Bergsonian philosophy? First, let us review the basics. Rhythm, melody, and harmony are often mentioned as the core components of music. Rhythm creates musical cohesion through combinations of long and short sounds, strong and weak beats, and so on. While some ethnic music may lack melody or harmony, none lack rhythm. Children engage with rhythm (Fort-Da) long before they hum a melody. Melody emerges from a sequence of sounds at various pitches, and without rhythm, melody cannot exist. Harmony arises when two or more different melodies overlap, creating a sequence of chords formed by sounds of differing pitches being played simultaneously.

Highlighting the fundamental nature of rhythm within this hierarchical structure holds some importance, but it should not result in an undue devaluation of melody and harmony. If it appears at times that we are excessively elevating rhythm and succumbing to pan-rhythmism in the following discussion, it is only because rhythm in Bergson’s philosophy

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 52. Cf. p. 66.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

has been largely overlooked until now. With this in mind, let us examine the aspects of duration revealed by melody and harmony on one hand, and by rhythm on the other.

2.1. Melody Vs. Rhythm: A Short History of Bergson Studies

Our preferred example to illustrate Bergson's concept of duration is melody. A notable advocate of this widely shared view is Jankélévitch.

A melody played backward, going upstream beginning with the last note, will only be an unspeakable cacophony. This is what *Time and Free Will* lets us understand. (...) In Bergson's philosophy, the temporal order and the succession of moments are not details of protocol: they are Bergson's philosophy itself²².

When he defines duration as "the spontaneous continuation of these dissonances infinitely organizing and resolving themselves"²³, he clearly considers it in terms of melody, harmony, or tonality: "Does not polyphony make it possible to conduct several superposed voices in parallel, voices that express themselves simultaneously and harmonize among themselves and all the while remain distinct and even opposed to one another?"²⁴ What Jankélévitch perceives in melody as the privileged image of duration is, as indicated by the title of the first chapter of his book, "Organic Totalities"²⁵: the dynamic and reciprocal constitution of the whole and its parts. The interpenetration of elements, their solidarity, and their indistinguishable succession — these are the aspects of duration that melody emphasizes.

Now, let us take a closer look at what happens when explaining duration using the metaphor of melody through two examples. In the first example, Bergson describes the state of consciousness necessary for pure duration to be precipitated. It is a rather complex procedure for our self to "refrain from separating its present state from its former states," and to "let itself *live*." We must neither "be entirely absorbed in the passing sensation or idea" (which, in the vocabulary of *Matter and Memory*, would mean positioning oneself in the "plane of dreams" and only seeing the past) nor "forget its former states" (which would correspond to the "plane of action" and only seeing the present).

it is enough that, in recalling these states, it does not set them alongside its actual state as one point alongside another, but forms both the past and the

²² JANKÉLÉVITCH, V. *Henri Bergson*. Durham: Duke University Press, 2015, p. 2.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 38.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 6: "All spiritual reality thus by nature possesses a certain totalizing power that makes it engulf all imported modifications and reconstitute at each step its total but continually transformed organism".

present states into an organic whole, as happens when we recall the notes of a tune [*les notes d'une mélodie*], melting, so to speak, into one another²⁶.

The example of the melody is used here to depict a *specific* state of consciousness set up through a highly deliberate effort, illustrating duration at the stage where fusion and interpenetrative organization of conscious facts have *already taken place*.

In the second example, what appears to be described is a dynamic process, such as mutual addition or organization. However, when Bergson refers to pure duration as “a succession of qualitative changes that melt into and permeate one another,” a hint of rhythm inevitably emerges “but its sensations will add themselves dynamically to one another and will organize themselves, like the successive notes of a tune [*les notes successives d'une mélodie*] by which we allow ourselves to be lulled and soothed [*laissons bercer*]”²⁷.

Certainly, the fundamental characteristics of duration revealed by the example of melody are organic totality, fusion, and interpenetration of qualitative multiplicities. But melody gives only their schematic reconstitution or artificial acquisition. In other words, melody can explain *pure duration*, but not sufficiently the *lived duration* that makes possible the very constitution of heterogeneous continuity itself.

2.2. “Melody of Tick-tock” (Cassou-Noguès)

In *Time and Free Will*, it often seems that even when discussing melody, the real issue at hand is rhythm. For example, take the following quote mentioned above (section 1.2). In this example, the most important point is “interrupting the rhythm” or “breaking the tempo” rather than forming a melody:

The proof is that, if we interrupt the rhythm [*si nous rompons la mesure*] by dwelling longer than is right on one note of the tune [*sur une note de la mélodie*], it is not its exaggerated length, as length, which will warn us of our mistake, but the qualitative change thereby caused in the whole of the musical phrase²⁸.

Only when we encounter such “anomalies,” do we come into contact with what constitutes melody and, consequently, interpenetrative organization. What does the metaphor of melody obscure? It is the situation where, at

²⁶ BERGSON, *Time and Free Will*, p. 100.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 103-104.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 101.

first glance, no change is visible and it seems to be pure repetition, but it is precisely there that Bergson finds change. An interesting observation on this point comes from Pierre Cassou-Noguès, an expert on Cavaillès and Gödel and a sophisticated philosophical essayist. His observation is interesting because, in his work *Melody of Tick-tock*, his evaluation of Bergson is nuanced. He focuses on Bergson's example of "following with my eyes on the dial of a clock the movement of the hand which corresponds to the oscillations of the pendulum"²⁹ and offers a wry compliment to Bergson's unique philosophical sensibility, which perceives not mechanical and tedious move, but rather the "melody of the clock" (*mélodie de l'horloge*).

The relationship to the clock in this text is quite unique. The tick-tock, which bores the Baudelairean subject and contaminates Weil's worker, seems to be capable of being listened to with pleasure. It is not about detaching from it, but rather attaching to it differently, without measuring our time by the hours marked on the clock face, as we ordinarily do³⁰.

Cassou-Noguès asks, who else but a Bergsonian person could become attached to and listen to the tick-tock sound in a way that seeks something other than utility? "How does this Bergsonian person listen to the melody of the tick-tock as an actual melody? In fact, as soon as he abandons the time of machines, the Bergsonian person is carried away by true duration, the time of life, where everything is music"³¹.

However, on the other hand, Cassou-Noguès asserts that this fondness for the tick-tock is inseparable from an obsession with the clock, and that a Bergsonian person cannot simply "laze around" (*traîner*). While one may divide between appreciating sound within duration and counting within spatialized time, both approaches are tied to an attachment to the clock. There is no turning away from the clock or detaching oneself from it. "The question underlying, in my view, "lazing around," the notion of wasted time (*le temps perdu*), which is found in Queneau's novels or certain texts by Baudelaire, does not arise for Bergson"³². Cassou-Noguès places Bergson on the side of melody, while taking from Bachelard the idea that rest, time well lost, time poorly lost, or alienating work (as Weil

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 107-108.

³⁰ CASSOU-NOGUÈS, P. *La Mélodie du tic-tac: et autres bonnes raisons de perdre son temps*. Paris: Éditions Flammarion, 2013, p. 144.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 154.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 144. Cassou-Noguès says that even in Proust's world, the flow of time is never truly lost. Since it is possible to search for and find lost time, it means that it was only temporarily lost. He says, "Literature that works to seek lost time also feeds on lost time in another sense," but this perspective will inevitably reflect back on Cassou-Noguès himself, who seeks the almost existential reality of "lazing around" at all costs. He points out that Bergson's focus is solely on an obsession with the clock. However, if we were to stir things up, we might say that Cassou-Noguès himself has a *strong obsession with detachment from the clock* and is not "lazing around" at all.

described) are all tied to rhythms: “It is rhythm that determines the form, direction, and meaning of time”³³. Now, it is time to move towards rhythm together with Bergson.

3. Rhythm, or Contractive Tension (Contractive Repetition)

As far as we know, it was Eugène Minkowski, famous for his work *Lived Time*, who first realized that examples of melody alone could not fully explain duration, sensing somehow the importance of the rhythm. In his lecture, titled “Pure Duration and Lived Duration,” given at the Franco-phone Philosophy Society to commemorate the centenary of Bergson’s birth, he stated the following:

In *Time and Free Will*, succession is placed at the forefront as the way to access pure duration. The very title of the second chapter (...) bears witness to this. Thus, melody serves as the preferred illustration: isolated notes in space, on one hand, and their organization into a melody in consciousness, on the other hand. However, with the model of melody alone, revealing as it may be, we cannot build our lives. / “Lived duration” puts an end to the ambiguities we have just mentioned. The “lived experience” renders tones much more vibrant [*tons bien plus vibrants*] and goes much deeper than consciousness does.”³⁴

Minkowski describes the characteristics of pure duration as a sequential organization of conscious phenomena. At the same time, he argues that lived duration must be understood at a deeper level than conscious phenomena, using the image of “vibrant tones.” However, we should not place excessive semantic weight on the term “vibrant.” Even in his seminal work *Lived Time*, where this term appears twice as often as “melody” or “rhythm,” it generally signifies little more than a favorable emotional value. Nonetheless, it is clear that Minkowski keenly felt the limitations of the melody metaphor. Recognizing this insight is sufficient for the moment.

How did, then, Bergson himself explain duration in *Time and Free Will*?³⁵ Even recalling just the famous examples, such as “the sounds of the bell”³⁶, “a series of blows from a hammer”³⁷, and “the strikes sounded by a clo-

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 160.

³⁴ MINKOWSKI, E. “La pure durée et la durée vécue”. In: *Bergson et nous*, Actes du X^e congrès des sociétés de philosophie de langue française, 1959, p. 240.

³⁵ By examining the occurrence of the terms, we find that “melody” appears seven times (DI 75, 77, 78, 83, 93, 111) and “rhythm” thirteen times (DI 9, 11, 12, 64, 79, 92, 111). Of course, no matter how frequently a term is used, if it carries little significance, it is of no consequence. What matters is not the literal appearance of the word but the functional reality of the image.

³⁶ BERGSON, *Time and Free Will*, p. 86.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

ck”³⁸, all seem to call for analysis in terms of rhythm. Take the hammer blows case: “Thus, when we hear a series of blows of a hammer, the sounds form an indivisible melody in so far as they are pure sensations, and, here again, give rise to a dynamic progress”³⁹. While the term melody is used in this analysis, the example clearly involves a certain rhythmic quality, and according to our usual sense of language, we would not call this a melody. Ultimately, the issue of what to call it is secondary. More importantly, and it is not just in the hammer blows case, but through all examples considered rhythmical, Bergson seems to be attempting to explore how sensible qualities are generated in quantitative phenomena, how repetition creates difference, and how certain numerosity acts somehow physically rather than intellectually.

3.1. Constitution of Durational Organization through “Quality of Quantity”

For example, in the following passage, the issue is not the particular sensory quality of each oscillation of the pendulum, but rather the sensory quality of “being lulled to sleep” that arises from the very situation of their repetition: “When the regular oscillations of the pendulum make us sleepy, is it the last sound heard, the last movement perceived, which produces this effect ?”⁴⁰ Bergson analyzes not the pure quality but the “quality of quantity”, in other words, the process by which quality is constituted.

I shall perceive one in the other, each permeating the other and organizing themselves like the notes of a tune, so as to form what we shall call a continuous or qualitative multiplicity with no resemblance to number. I shall thus get the image of pure duration. (...) Hence we must admit that the sounds combined with one another and acted, not by their quantity as quantity, but by the quality which their quantity exhibited, i.e. by the rhythmic organization of the whole⁴¹.

This quote seems to serve as definitive evidence separating melody and rhythm. In the first half, where the issue is describing the aspects of interpenetration, continuity, and successive condensation of duration, the metaphor of melody is used. However, when the discussion turns to the principle that makes the very organization of heterogeneous multiplicities possible, the term rhythm appears. The focus of the latter part of the discussion is not merely about “recalling the notes of a tune [*les notes d’une mélodie*], melting, so to speak, into one another”, nor about discussing the shift in

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 128.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 125.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 105-106.

perspective from the succession of discretely juxtaposed notes (wherein the concept of space is already involved) to the fusion of elements, that is, from pure quantity to pure quality.

Instead, Bergson is addressing the very constitution of the distinction between quantity and quality (“quantity without quality” appears only later), and thus the point where lived duration makes addition, measurement, and counting possible. It is not merely the purely qualitative aspect of the whole but rather the quality inherent in quantity that is at issue. The term “rhythm” is used precisely at such a point. Needless to say, this is the point where what Yamazaki calls the “structure of pure duration” (what we would call the “structure of lived duration”) comes into question. In this sense, the rhythm of duration described in the second chapter of *Time and Free Will* is more appropriately called “organizing” rather than “organic”⁴².

From this perspective, it becomes clear that the metaphor used in the following passage must be melody. “There is simply the continuous melody of our inner life, — a melody which is going on and will go on, indivisible, from the beginning to the end of our conscious existence. Our personality is precisely that. This indivisible continuity of change is precisely what constitutes true duration”⁴³. In the essay “Perception of Change” from *Creative Mind*, the famous thesis states: “There are changes, but there are underneath the change no things which change”⁴⁴. The very reality of change without things that change is called melody. What is crucial in a

⁴² Cf. FUJITA, H. “Ce que la philosophie du rythme doit à Bergson”, in *Revue de philosophie française*, no. 26 (2021), Tokyo: Société franco-japonaise de philosophie, p. 61-72. In this paper, I proposed new reading of *Time and Free Will* and *Matter and Memory*, by developing Sauvanet’s SPM, a solid framework for rhythm analysis (Structure, Periodicity, Movement) as presented in his seminal work *Rhythm and Reason*. We examined, for instance, the analysis of the aesthetic emotion of grace in the first chapter of *Time and Free Will*: in the grace of a dancer “the regularity of the rhythm establishes a kind of communication between him and us, and the periodic returns of the measure are like so many invisible threads by means of which we set in motion this imaginary puppet” (BERGSON, *Time and Free Will*, p. 12). There, the rhythm which exudes an “irresistible charm,” is characterized by mechanical repetition and creates a one-way, asymmetrical, and hypnotic “communication,” devoid of dynamic two-way communication. We have termed this the “hypnotic rhythm”. At this point, the concept of duration has not yet appeared, but it is clear that the previously emphasized aspects of mechanical repetition, corporeity, and numerosity play important roles here as well. I have chosen to highlight this example, even at the cost of a lengthy note, because it exemplifies our resistance to the temptation of pan-rhythmism. While we believe that focusing on rhythm can shed light on significant aspects of Bergson’s philosophy, we do not claim that it explains everything. Hypnotic rhythm marks the transition from intensity to depth, from discussions on the horizontal succession of duration to those on the vertical contraction of personality and memory. Therefore, while examples of rhythm appear prominently in the theory of duration in the second chapter of *Time and Free Will*, they are absent from the discussions of freedom and personality in the third chapter. Understanding both the possibilities and limitations of rhythmic understanding (*rhythmeasure*) is crucial for comprehending the entire structure of *Time and Free Will*.

⁴³ BERGSON, *Creative Mind*, p. 176.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 173.

Bergsonian melody is the continuity itself, the pure succession devoid of simultaneity, and its indivisibility.

So, what constitutes such a melody? Even if the same sound continues, it becomes a melody because of rhythm. While melody is organized based on the sensory quality of pitch, it is rhythm that makes this organization possible in the first place, at the point where the sensory quality itself arises — where the quality presented by quantity is at issue.

If the discussion so far has led to the misunderstanding that “quantity produces quality,” it is mistaken. In Bergson’s philosophy, the dichotomy of quality and quantity must be reexamined from a generative perspective (this becomes decisive in *Matter and Memory* but is already clearly directed in *Time and Free Will*). Rhythm remains key at the point where the quality inherent in quantity generates both quantity without quality and quality without quantity.

In a word, the process by which we count units and make them into a discrete multiplicity has two sides; on the one hand we assume that they are identical, which is conceivable only on condition that these units are ranged alongside each other in a homogeneous medium; but on the other hand the third unit, for example, when added to the other two, alters the nature, the appearance and, as it were, the rhythm [*comme le rythme*] of the whole; without this interpenetration and this, so to speak, qualitative progress [*ce progrès en quelque sorte qualitatif*], no addition would be possible. Hence it is through the quality of quantity that we form the idea of quantity without quality⁴⁵.

“The quality of quantity” or “this, so to speak, qualitative progress” precedes quantitative multiplicity or “quantity without quality” by endowing, as an efficacy over utility⁴⁶, the very foundation with its possibility. “And yet we cannot even form the idea of discrete multiplicity without considering at the same time a qualitative multiplicity”⁴⁷. In defining this numerically different aspect of qualitative multiplicity, Bergson introduces rhythm.

Let us not overlook the seemingly trivial words “as it were” (*comme*) or “so to speak” (*en quelque sorte*). Bergson wrote “as it were, the rhythm” because there was an *excess* that could not be fully expressed by words like “nature” or “appearance.” Bergson is a philosopher who pursues precision to the utmost. Precision is not solely about using mathematical formulas, logical symbols, or the latest scientific terms. This expression “as it were, the rhythm” is also precise in its own way.

⁴⁵ BERGSON, *Time and Free Will*, p. 123.

⁴⁶ From our perspective, the opposition between efficacy and utility is the most fundamental one running throughout Bergson’s philosophy. For more details, refer to the introduction of our work, FUJITA, H. *Bergson: An Untimely Philosophy*. Tokyo: Keiso Shobo, 2022.

⁴⁷ BERGSON, *Time and Free Will*, p. 122-123.

Heterogeneous Continuity is akin to melody, but it is rhythm's *tonus*, its contractive tension, that seamlessly connects the normally incompatible elements of heterogeneity and continuity. In other words, the term "dynamic", which Bergson uses to describe the progressive organization of duration, operate on two levels. The continuity of duration is not a homogeneous, flat continuity; it is a continuity that generates internal differences by constantly repeating itself through the arrival of new experiences (Level 1: Melody). The dynamic nature of organic totalities is underpinned from within by tensive differentiation (Level 0: Rhythm).

Earlier, we identified three fundamental elements of music: melody, harmony, and rhythm. If melody represents the successive continuity of sounds (horizontal structuring), and harmony represents the simultaneous relationships of pitch (vertical structuring), rhythm is what contracts the two and turns them into a musical temporal phenomenon. While melody aptly describes the dimension of heterogeneous continuity and the sequential unfolding of organic totality, rhythm reveals the dimension that enables their formation, the dimension of condensation from which pure quantity and pure quality, sameness and otherness, and the two multiplicities emerge.

3.2. *Rhythmeasure* and Recent Research

Now, let us highlight the intersection between the *rhythmeasure* theory and recent research, specifically Sébastien Miravete's *Bergson Structuraliste*⁴⁸ and Yasushi Hirai's *Made Out of Time*⁴⁹. Both are magnum opuses filled with challenging interpretations and novel concepts, making it impossible to cover everything within just a few pages. We will only focus on aspects related to our issue here.

3.2.1. "Duration-Number" Theory (Miravete)

Both Miravete and Hirai seem to aim at portraying the entirety of Bergson's philosophy by establishing a gradient between the two types of duration mentioned at the beginning of this paper: the duration of conscious facts and the duration of material objects. Miravete argues that Bergson's invention of duration is nothing more than that of a new number of time units. However, didn't Bergson, in the second chapter of *Time and Free*

⁴⁸ MIRAVETE, S. *Bergson structuraliste. L'aube d'une autre anthropologie structurale et cognitive*. Dijon: Les presses du réel, 2023.

⁴⁹ HIRAI, Y. *Made Out of Time: An Invitation to Bergson's Philosophy of Time*. Tokyo: Seidosha, 2022.

Will, oppose duration to space, specifying that every number is of a spatial nature? But here we are dealing with abstract space, which arises from the comparison between the duration of conscious facts and that of material objects. The former can synthesize qualities derived from the latter.

Miravete recalls the existence of a “real space,”⁵⁰ noting that properties previously attributed exclusively to abstract space actually originate from the duration of material objects: exteriority, simultaneity, homogeneity, extensivity, immobility, impenetrability, objectivity, and magnitude. In short, there are two durations and two spaces. Therefore, the fundamental opposition in *Time and Free Will* lies less between duration and abstract space than between two immediate data of consciousness, between two very different durations — the numerical duration of conscious facts and the otherwise numerical duration of material objects.

Hence Miravete’s statement: “Duration is a qualitative number. Bergson never denumerized conscious experience. On the contrary, he renumerized it. He invented for it sensible and temporal numbers”⁵¹. If psychophysics is to be criticized, it is not accurate to accuse it of quantifying the intensive, that is, breaking down psychic states into a certain number of elementary states. The disagreement lies in the very *nature* of these units. We should instead ask: What *units* for joy? What *units* for human freedom?

Thus, Miravete argues that between the two poles — duration-numbers on one hand and mathematical numbers on the other — there exist various types of numbers. While we have introduced a differential called *rhythmeasure*, Miravete proposes distinguishing four types of numbers: *ordinary numbers* (a sum of homogenized, impenetrable, simultaneous qualities), *abstract* or *mathematical numbers* (a sum of determined multiplicities of points, impenetrable, simultaneous), *perceived numbers* that form immediately in perceptual experience (a sum of homogeneous or heterogeneous, impenetrable, simultaneous qualities), and *fused numbers* in the duration of conscious facts (heterogeneous, penetrable, successive).

Applied to the examples discussed in *Time and Free Will*, the sheep counted by the shepherd are ordinary numbers. The units composed of points (such as a segment) in a graph form abstract numbers through their addition. Footstep sounds are numbers perceived internally. The sounds of a bell (independent of any spatial representation) are fused numbers, where their units (the sounds) merge into one another. The first three types of numbers fall under abstract space (ordinary and abstract numbers) or real space (perceived numbers). Only the units of the last type (fused numbers) can interpenetrate (unlike the units of ordinary or abstract numbers) or

⁵⁰ BERGSON, *Time and Free Will*, p. 100.

⁵¹ MIRAVETE, *Bergson structuraliste*, p. 151.

actually do interpenetrate (unlike the units of perceived numbers). The last two types exist in duration. Miravete declares: “The great merit of Bergson is having invented another arithmetic”⁵². The role of this Bergsonian arithmetisation is not to solve mathematical problems nor to replace traditional mathematics. Its aim, being more philosophical and ontological, is to describe processes of intensification or acts of freedom as faithfully as possible. Even without his own words⁵³, it is clear that Miravete’s *duration-number* and our *rhythmeasure* are closely related.

3.2.2. MTS (Multi-Time Scale) Theory (Hirai)

The Multi-Time Scale (MTS) theory proposed by Yasushi Hirai essentially explains the structure of our experiences through a hierarchical framework of time. The key concept is “scale relativity of the past,”⁵⁴ which elucidates the “preservation” of sensation, experience, and personality by suggesting that what is the “past” in a lower hierarchy is perceived as the “present” in a higher hierarchy.

First, in the dimension Hirai calls Level 1, externally observable and quantitatively measurable microscopic periodic time structures, such as electromagnetic waves, collapse due to human low time resolution. This condensation leads to the deformation of the distinguishability space, resulting in the emergence of “sensory quality.” This process generates *qualia*.

Then, in the dimension, termed Level 2, “experiential quality” is generated. This is the dimension where time is experienced as a flow. The *qualia* I experience sequentially are temporally unfolded in reality. When condensed, their arrangement structure disintegrates, but the lost distinguishability is compensated by an additional quality dimension. Thus, in addition to sensory quality, experiential quality — which encompasses flow information converted into quality — is what Bergson refers to as “pure memory.”

Finally, in the dimension known as Level 3, just as the experiential quality of Level 2 is constituted by incorporating the relational structure of sensory qualities in Level 1 (generation of flow quality), the relational structure of experiential qualities in Level 2 is incorporated to establish “personal qualities,” essentially the self. No matter how many times I drink my favorite *sake*, each experience is distinct and unique. Bergson states:

since I have lived in the meanwhile. If, then, the two images are the same, they are not presented in the same frame, and the vague feeling of the

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 200.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁵⁴ HIRAI, *Made Out of Time*, p. 294.

difference of the frames surrounds, like a fringe, the consciousness I have of the identity of the images, and allows me at every moment to distinguish them.⁵⁵

In our view, what Hirai refers to as Level 1 corresponds to what is commonly called “rhythm of duration” in *Matter and Memory*, and what he refers to as Level 2 corresponds to what I called “organizing rhythm” in our reading of the second chapter of *Time and Free Will*. This rhythm loses its presence where memory and personality come into play, but precisely because of this, it confirms that *rhythmmeasure* is “cut to the measure of reality (*taillés à la mesure de la réalité*)”⁵⁶.

4. *Ethics of démesure*

However, there is a missing aspect in these advanced studies: the exploration of the relationship between these theories and ethico-political thought, as examined in *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*. This is precisely what we began with the theory of *rhythmmeasure* about twenty years ago and are now once again aiming to develop.

We focused on rhythm to define as precisely as possible the relationship between the duration of objects and the duration of humans. The prominent presence of rhythmic elements in the examples Bergson provides in *Time and Free Will* (the bell, the hammer, the clock) is evidence that they also demonstrate the deep connection between duration and space, mind and body, life and matter. Duration, no matter how much its pure spirituality is emphasized, inherently contains a pathway to materiality or corporality.

Interestingly, Deleuze, who defines duration as “what changes nature, quality, heterogeneity, what differs from itself”⁵⁷, refers to “rhythm” in the context where duration is open to otherness: “my own duration, such as I live it in the impatience of waiting, for example, serves to reveal other durations that beat to other rhythms, that differ in kind [*diffère en nature*] from mine”⁵⁸. This openness to the Other is the decisive feature of rhythm, guiding us into the ethico-political domains. And it is here that the aspect of *measure* finally comes into its own.

⁵⁵ BERGSON, H. *Mind-Energy. Lectures and Essays*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1920, p. 174.

⁵⁶ For our resistance to pan-rhythmism, see the note 42.

⁵⁷ DELEUZE, G. *Desert Islands and Other Texts (1953-1974)*. New York: Semiotext(e), 2002, p. 26.

⁵⁸ DELEUZE, G. *Bergsonism*. New York: Zone Books, 1988, p. 32.

4.1. Calculating the Incalculable

Normally, morals seeks to achieve a certain “measured” or “moderate” state in society. In the best-case scenario, this would align with Aristotle’s concept of *mésotès* (the golden mean, or *juste mesure* in French): not a mediocre or average position, but an excellent, perfect, optimal position that avoids both excess and deficiency. On the contrary, *Two Sources*, which seeks to heed the experiences of mystics to advance morally open actions, can be viewed as a form of *démésure*. To illustrate, Bergson retraces the history of “justice,” a moral concept encompassing most other moral concepts and being “most instructive”. Before the advent of Christianity, the justice, meted out by the law of retaliation, was applied quantitatively according to proportion (“an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth”). Although it may seem shocking from a modern perspective, it was based on an understandable principle, making it “reasonable” and, in that sense, *mesuré* (measured, moderate)⁵⁹. Entirely different is the justice brought by Jesus. Criticized for “border[ing] upon paradox, and even upon contradiction”⁶⁰, and thus for being “impracticable” and “illogical”⁶¹, this dynamic justice appears as immeasurable, *démésuré*.

it is a far cry from such examples of equilibrium, arrived at mechanically and always transitory, like that of the scales held by the justice of yore, to a justice such as ours, the justice of the “rights of man,” which no longer evokes ideas of relativity and proportion, but, on the contrary, of the incommensurable and the absolute.”⁶²

Two points must be noted here. One is that this Bergsonian ethics of *démésure* is not merely a negation but a critique of moderate or *measured* morals, as the logic of “turn the other cheek”, by disrupting conventional moral measures, restores to it an inherently excessive dynamism.

On the one hand the closed, on the other the open. Current morality is not abolished; but it appears like a virtual stop in the course of actual progression. The old method is not given up; but it is fitted into a more general method, as is the case when the dynamic reabsorbs the static, the latter then becoming a mere particular instance of the former⁶³.

This immediately leads to the second point: it is precisely the *rhythmmeasure* that drives the ethics of *démésure*. Remember the famous article of

⁵⁹ BERGSON, *Two Sources*, p. 69: “Justice has always evoked ideas of equality, of proportion, of compensation. *Pensare*, from which we derive “compensation” and “recompense,” means to *weigh* [*peser*]. Justice is represented as holding the scales”.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 60: “we might compare what is impracticable in certain precepts of the Gospels to what was illogical in the first explanations of the differential calculus. Indeed, between the morality of the ancients and Christianity we should find much the same relation as that between the mathematics of antiquity and our own”.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 74.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

Benveniste on the notion of “rhythm”: as one of the ideas that affect a large portion of human activities, “perhaps it even serves to distinguish types of human behaviour, individual and collective, inasmuch as we are aware of durations and the repetitions that govern them, and also when, beyond the human sphere, we project a rhythm into things and events”⁶⁴.

Gathering the problems of number (*monarchy, oligarchy, democracy*), the question of rhythm is directly ethico-political. As a kind of theoretical differential gear between the closed and the open, the *rhythmmeasure* allows to profoundly redefine measure and lead it to a untamed territory through radical interrogation. Open justice, rather than being incalculable, should be seen as a command to calculate with the incalculable. When we consider the current world’s imbalance and resultant disorder, we need to imbue the Shakespearean expression “measure for measure” with a new meaning: “*démesure* for *démesure*.”

But machines (...) have actually imparted to our organism an extension so vast, have endowed it with a power so mighty, so out of proportion [*disproportionné*] to the size and strength of that organism, that surely none of all this was foreseen in this structural plan of our species. (...) Now, in this body, distended out of all proportion [*démesurément*], the soul remains what it was, too small to fill it, too weak to guide it. Hence the gap between the two. Hence the tremendous social, political and international problems (...) which provoke so many chaotic and ineffectual efforts to fill it. (...) Machinery will find its true vocation again, it will render services in proportion [*proportionné*] to its power, only if mankind, which it has bowed still lower to the earth, can succeed, through it, in standing erect and looking heavenwards⁶⁵.

The challenge is to harmonize the rhythm of science, intellect, and mechanization with the rhythm of mystic spirituality — this is why the final chapter of *Two Sources* is entitled as “Mechanics and Mysticism” (*Mécanique et mystique*) — to discover a new moral dimension, a seemingly paradoxical and even illogical new measurement. This measurement is achieved by breaking the imbalance between the mechanically augmented body and the soul, which has been relatively diminished by this technological progress. Turning the other cheek strikes at the conventional morality and politics.

4.2. Two rhythms of lazing around

Let us return to Cassou-Noguès’ arguments on “lazing around” (*traîner*). His claims regarding Bergson can be summarized in the following assertion: “The possibility of lazing around, of inactivity, has no place in Bergson’s

⁶⁴ BENVENISTE, É. “The Notion of “Rhythm” in its Linguistic Expression.” In: *Problems in General Linguistics*. Miami: University of Miami Press, 1971, p. 281.

⁶⁵ BERGSON, *Two Sources*, p. 309-310.

philosophy”⁶⁶. It might seem inappropriate to discuss “lazing around” in this section, which addresses the ethico-political scope of *rhythmeasure*. However, that is not the case. Quite the opposite, I would argue against Cassou-Noguès, stating that “laze around” (*traîner*) is fundamental to Bergson’s philosophy. This is what I attempted to express elsewhere with the term “the idleness of pure memory”⁶⁷. Here, I will only quote a passage from *Matter and Memory*: “To call up the past in the form of an image [of true memory], we must be able to withdraw ourselves from the action of the moment, we must have the power to value the useless [*l’inutile*], we must have the will to dream [*vouloir rêver*]”⁶⁸.

Indeed, I would even argue that it is a more fundamental “lazing around” than what Cassou-Noguès describes. For, Bergson says, “Time retards, or rather it is retardation”⁶⁹. Nevertheless, Cassou-Noguès might not agree with us due to Bergson’s words “value” and “will” in the previous quote. He might think that Bergson’s critique of “disorder” (in a cluttered room, objects are not arranged in the abstract order of intelligence as I had expected, but rather left according to the order of the life of the person who lives there) leads to the conclusion that “the time we consider wasted is merely a different orientation, a gaze directed in another way.”

In this case, it ends up being useful and, after all, it cannot be considered “lazing around.” From his expressions like “the time of life, where everything is music,” “our life, which is so full that it acts when we do nothing,” and “an inner duration that would give fullness to the time we wish to waste,” it seems he senses a human existence that grounds in the reality of “lazing around” and contrasts Bergson’s focus on clocks as a fulfillment of full life. Even though Cassou-Noguès argues that Bergson’s works only treat the various more or less pathological phenomena such as *déjà vu*, which might be seen as “losing the thread and getting muddled,” anecdotally, there is no wasted time. This is because, in the inversed cone in *Matter and Memory*, the past is entirely preserved. The past, generally concealed by the present, remains always available and can reappear in memory.

Contrary to Bergson, Cassou-Noguès, standing on Bachelard’s side, argues that time is discontinuous and can be lost, and thus “lazing around” and rest have true reality. He seems to confuse efficacy with utility⁷⁰, as eviden-

⁶⁶ CASSOU-NOGUÈS, *La Mélodie du tic-tac*, p.166.

⁶⁷ FUJITA, H. “Sublime and Panoramic Vision. Bergson, Kant and Heidegger on Schematism”, in *Bergsoniana* no. 3 (2023), p. 165-193.

⁶⁸ BERGSON, *Matter and Memory*, p. 94.

⁶⁹ BERGSON, *Creative Mind*, p. 110.

⁷⁰ Cassou-Noguès also says: “This episode of the clock is isolated in Bergson’s work because the spatialization of the self is then well related to a machine, a technical and social device (...). However, in general, Bergson shows little to no interest in machines” (CASSOU-NOGUÈS, *La Mélodie du tic-tac*, p. 144-145). As it is a common misconception, while writing these lines,

ced by the following passage: “This is not wasted time. On the contrary, by returning to duration, to this life that carries us away, we can be most active and, for example, make the best decisions most quickly.”

However, to us who have tried to explain the world through a gradient between two durations, this seems like a superficial conflict (real and false lazing around) that can be resolved by the scale relativity of time. We have no intention of underestimating the significant nothingness for individuals. We are constantly haunted by various “nothings,” from trivial worries to more than severe suffering. They are “realities” for our lives. However, having learned the difference between microscopic and macroscopic perspectives, molar and molecular, etc., we can affirm another vision without denying that reality. We can be idly standing at significant crossroads of life’s evolution while living through intense, life-and-death moments as individuals, yet, as a species, enjoy our time more than ever. There is no contradiction in that.

It would be unfair, nevertheless, not to mention that Cassou-Noguès himself realizes that there are ways to mediate between Bergson and Bachelard: “However, the metaphysical antagonism between Bergson and Bachelard would take us too far. Moreover, it is not certain that we need to choose between the reality of the moment and that of duration. Mechanisms like Whitehead’s might allow for a reconciliation between the two.” Readers of this paper will understand that, without waiting for Whitehead, it is enough to reread Bergson together with *rhythmeasure*, Miravete, and Hirai to find a sufficient reconciliation.

Conclusion

The path we have followed is a scarcely traveled trail. Let’s briefly review it.

In the section 1, the concept of *rhythmeasure* is reintroduced, essentially tracing its history. At the core of Bergson’s philosophy is a sharp dualistic distinction between *duration* (lived time as qualitative and immeasurable multiplicity) and *space* (numerical multiplicity objectively measurable).

Cassou-Noguès must have forgotten the fourth chapter of *Creative Evolution* (the cinematographical mechanism) and “Mechanism and Mysticism” in *Two Sources*, and moreover the famous words of Canguilhem on organology leading to Simondon or Stiegler: “Henri Bergson, in *Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, explicitly argues that the spirit of mechanical invention, although nourished by science, remains distinct and could even separate from the latter. Bergson is also one of the rare French philosophers, if not the only one, to have considered mechanical invention as a biological function, an aspect of the organization of matter by life. His *Creative Evolution* is, in a sense, a treatise of general organology” (CANGUILHEM, G. *Knowledge of Life*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2008, p. 174, n. 64).

However, our concept allows for a reinterpretation of this distinction in a non-dualistic direction. This prepares the groundwork for a unified understanding of the duration of consciousness and the duration of things.

In the section 2 and the section 3.1, under the perspective opened by the *rhythmeasure*, the two examples used to explain the duration, the typical one, *melody*, and *rhythm*, which has rarely been given attention but plays a crucial role in our view, are taken up in contrast (Jankélévitch vs. Minkowski). We saw how each portrays different aspects and characteristics of duration. Here, it can be said that the current relevance of the *rhythmeasure* is demonstrated.

The aspect of duration emphasized by melody is the heterogeneous continuity and organic totalities created by the successive and merging of different sounds, i.e., the aspect of successive condensation. In contrast, rhythm is characterized by repetitive condensation produced by events recurring over time. Most of the examples Bergson analyzes in his *Time and Free Will* are rhythmic phenomena (bell, clock, hummer, etc.) because they bring about qualitative changes through quantitative repetition. Rhythm plays a crucial role in supporting the very underlying structure (vertical contraction) for the successive organization (horizontal contraction) of conscious facts. This provides a perspective for a unified understanding of two durations.

In the section 3.2 and the section 4.1, we glimpse the future of the *rhythmeasure* in two ways. First, in the section 3.2, we showed the junctions between the *rhythmeasure* theory and recent studies: both Miravete and Hirai attempted to depict the overall picture of Bergson's philosophy by establishing a gradient between two durations. This is also the direction of *expanded Bergsonism* declared by Élie During and Paul-Antoine Miquel. Their *Kyoto Manifesto* seeks to re-launch the collaboration between philosophy and science that Bergson himself aimed for, by working with researchers in the contemporary sciences⁷¹.

The second aspect, developed in the section 4.1, is to show some ethico-political implications that the concept of *rhythmeasure* can reveal through new reading of Bergson's philosophy. The seemingly spatial image of the *closed* and the *open* also bears certain numerical quality through our interpretation of the ambiguity of *démesuré*. Remember Bergson's claim

⁷¹ DURING, É. and MIQUEL, P.-A. "We Bergsonians: The Kyoto Manifesto." In: Yasushi Hirai (ed.), *Bergson's Scientific Metaphysics: Matter and Memory Today*, London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023, p. 239: "Bergson succeeded in devising a method which makes it possible to discern and create new *problems* – the originality of some of the problems he formulated for himself still have the power to astonish us. It is in the light of the questions he bequeathed to us, and above all in the light of those he allowed us to pose in our turn that we have to ask ourselves today, collectively, whether we still *want* to be Bergsonians, and whether we still *can* be".

at the beginning of *Creative Mind*: “What philosophy has lacked most of all is precision. Philosophical systems are not cut to the measure of the reality (*taillés à la mesure de la réalité*) in which we live”⁷². Until now, this famous passage has been recognized only for its epistemological value in understanding reality more accurately. However, it is entirely possible to interpret it, in conjunction with *The Two Sources of Morality and Religion*, as an exploration of new ethical and political scales⁷³.

In the section 4.2, we tackled another aspect of *démesuré*: “lazing around.” Contrary to Cassou-Noguès, I contend that “lazing around” is fundamental to Bergson’s ideas, as seen in our interpretation of “the idleness of pure memory.” Cassou-Noguès might disagree, viewing Bergson’s critique of disorder as counter to idleness. Nevertheless, understanding the interplay between different forms of time and existence allows for a reconciliation of these views, highlighting the importance of both activity and idleness in Bergson’s philosophy.

Lastly, let us have a look at the *modesty of rhythm*, which might appear flashy at first glance. In the very passage where Cassou-Noguès talks about the “melody of the tick-tock,” rhythm sneaks in as if nothing happened: “Bergson is sitting in front of the clock, as if at a show, listening to music, watching a dance: the movement, the rhythm take on an indivisible unity”⁷⁴. In our everyday life, rhythm operates quietly behind the melody of life. In the second chapter of *Time and Free Will*, it is said: “every sensation is altered by repetition”⁷⁵, “When e.g. I take my first walk in a town in which I am going to live, my environment produces on me two impressions at the same time, one of which is destined to last while the other will constantly change”⁷⁶. Or in the third chapter, it is also stated: “even the simplest psychic elements (...) are in a constant state of becoming, and the same feeling, by the mere fact of being repeated, is a new feeling”⁷⁷. This perspective on the subtle qualitative change through quantitative repetition runs through Bergson’s philosophy. He considered one of the characteristics of French philosophy to be the modesty of the empirical approach:

However, French philosophers generally seem to have had an afterthought, namely that it is easy to systematize and to think through all the

⁷² BERGSON, *Creative Mind*, p. 9.

⁷³ We have presented such an interpretation on the “Conversation and Philosophy” in the introduction II of *Creative Mind* elsewhere. Cf. FUJITA, H. “Diremption and Intersection: The Violence of Language in Bergson and Sorel”, in *Parrhesia: A Journal of Critical Philosophy* no. 36 (2022), p. 180-200. See the section I-1: Language as a central problem in Bergson’s political philosophy.

⁷⁴ CASSOU-NOGUÈS, *La Mélodie du tic-tac*, p. 142-143.

⁷⁵ BERGSON, *Time and Free Will*, p. 131.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

consequences of a given idea, but that the real difficulty is much rather to stop a deduction when it is necessary to do so, to bend it as required, by using the in-depth study of the particular sciences and the uninterrupted contact with reality⁷⁸.

Doesn't this fundamental stance of Bergson contradict the *démésure* and extremism (*jusqu'au-boutisme*) of *Two Sources of Morality and Religion* that we confirmed in the section 4 — such as the “law of double frenzy,” the “law of dichotomy,” psychical research, the call of moral heroes, and the return to simplicity, etc.? No, it does not. Radical and excessive is the *delicacy* of rhythmmeasure to “reconstitute, with the infinitely small elements which we thus perceive of the real curve, the curve itself stretching out into the darkness behind them”⁷⁹. It was a radical and *démésuré* attempt to find the meaning beyond (*au-delà*) and the beyond of meaning, even in the extremities of life's folds, by “the faint light which, illuminating the passage from the *immediate* to the *useful*, marks the dawn of our human experience,” at the “turn of experience” (*tournant de l'expérience*)⁸⁰. Beyond the easily recognizable radicalness, there exists a subtle excessiveness. Just like rhythm.

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⁷⁸ BERGSON, H. “French Philosophy”, in *Philosophical Inquiries*, vol. 2 no. 1 (2014), p. 213.

⁷⁹ BERGSON, *Matter and Memory*, p. 241-242.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

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