

**TOWARDS AN ECOLOGY OF RHYTHM,
the seminal contribution of rhythmanalysis for the comparative study of some
rhythm based epistemologies**

is a three years research project under the responsibility of Olga Pombo and Michel Hulin, hosted by the CFCUL (Lisbon) and the EHESS (CEIAS, Paris), funded by FCT, conducted by A. Freire

SUMMARY

“In search of Indian rhythmanalysis roots and links” is an excellent pretext to open up and expand an unexplored research avenue in comparative epistemology. Addressing the seminal role of rhythmanalysis in scientific milieus and its current outburst, this project fully explores the scientific landscapes from where it emerges and towards which it evolves, with special stress on the therapeutic ones. Triggered by the complete lack of research on LAPS’s rhythmanalysis, on the unexplored links of rhythmanalysis with Indian science and philosophy, of Bachelard with Indian thought, and on the **rhythm** as a common investigation line for dissimilar epistemological and medical paradigms, the proposal addresses diversified levels of contemporary problematics and, furthering the epistemological debates around ethnosciences and the ethical debates on the Big Share - we/them, evolves toward the epistemic paradigm of a **bridging research**.

Besides its multidisciplinary realm - history of science, philosophy, ethnoepistemology, ayurveda - this research has a transdisciplinary dimension, cutting across these areas to focus on an overall region, overviewing and interconnecting them all, which is being termed “rhythmology” but that we prefer to call *ecology of rhythm*.

1. STATE OF THE ART

Yet, if in a static academic milieu, beyond scholars working on rhythm and rhythmology, it is simply an outstanding word, rhythmanalysis is now a well established cognitive and praxic approach in a growing number of fields. Recently have been the conferences, colloquies, workshops, seminars organized around rhythmanalysis and rhythm and number are planned for the current year. Rhythmanalysis is spreading like a wildfire ...

Though intertwined, for the proposal's clarity, the topic areas will be distinctly outlined:

1. 1. The gush of rhythmanalysis

Rhythmanalysis appeared, after its presentation by Bachelard (*La dialectique de la durée*, 1936), as a catchall concept brightly enlightening the euphoria of discovery of energy, vibrations and waves in early 20th century. Its last chapter is fully committed to present the work of Lúcio Alberto Pinheiro dos Santos (LAPS hereinafter). However, though he coined the word, almost nothing is known about him and, despite being a major source of inspiration for Bachelard, his book, *La Rythmanalyse* (1931), remains untraceable and there are no first hand references other than Bachelard's presentation. Despite some literary attempts (Cunha, Domingues, Baptista), until today no academic research has been conducted in view of locating the work of LAPS or explore his scientific milieu.

After a long period of incubation (circa 50 years), in train of Lefebvre's posthumous *Eléments de Rythmanalyse* (1992), glossing the seminal work of LAPS, many are distinctly venturing to shape rhythmology as a new discipline. If studies on Bachelard's concept of rhythm, especially in French speaking milieus, are available (Meschonnic, Sauvanet, Wunenburger) a panoptic study for understanding the development of rhythmanalysis into a rhythmology as a new discipline has not been tackled.

1. 2. Cognitive permeability to Indian epistemologies

Bachelard acknowledges explicitly that "rhythmanalysis meets the teachings of Indian philosophy" (DD, 146)

But where does rhythmanalysis meet them?

Which is the impact of their meeting today?

These are unformulated questions pursued here.

Antecedents bridging Asiatic modes of thought and experience with European ones were scattered since Marcel Mauss and very especially Masson-Oursel in the thirties. That stream was brightly joined these last thirty years of literary, research and teaching activity by Halbfass, Matilal, Iveković, Hulin, Chenet, Zimmermann, Droit, Jullien. A consistent, extensive and inspiring comparative approach has been articulated throughout, comprehensively contributing to soften European resistance to Indian alienity.

Aiming to show in which way Indian Philosophy was a source where Bachelard dared to drink, the project will follow that approach tackling the challenges of comparison.

Though Bachelard's acquaintance with Indian thought is known, the presence of its seminal inspiration was not investigated so far. Actually, there is evidence that his anthropology and epistemology of time could have dug into Indian rhythm based modes of articulating and experiencing time and space. To follow this hypothesis leads to survey the European cognitive permeability to Indian approaches verifying how far Adas assumption that "As a rule, modern science has only the vaguest notions about non-Western epistemologies" (1997), apply to that period and to Bachelard.

1. 3. The rhythm in therapeutic landscapes and the key role of ayurveda

"Therapeutic actions should be performed from rhythm to rhythm rather than from thing to thing" (DD, 135)

Using LAPS rhythmanalysis to accommodate the concern of his time with vibration, waves, radiation, Bachelard ventured therapeutic suggestions based on rhythm, arousing what is becoming an ecology of rhythm. The research will show that through rhythmanalysis Bachelard responds to the old therapeutic concern of philosophy, reframing it within the emergent scientific theories.

In the modern therapeutic landscapes, ayurveda (traditional Indian medical system) appears as the nearest to Bachelard's therapeutic pledge and, fast spreading around the world, is becoming a transnational phenomenon. In its tenets it assumes a fundamental continuity among all elements of the universe, conceptually and experimentally grounded on a systemic fluid exchange between the environment and the body. Ayurvedic practices show that the human living organism is an organically integrated system, whose complexity is accessible to the medical enterprise that readjusts the living organism with its milieu through the harmonization of fluids rhythm.

Scattered studies on the role of rhythm in Indian thought are available, but an investigation on the role of rhythm on Indian science and its medical systems has never been carried out, nor connections explored with western scientific ventures on rhythm, despite their striking similitude, as is the case with rhythm analysis.

2. OBJECTIVES

Beyond the strict scope of the objectives detailed below, the goal of the project is to find, create, spread and transfer knowledge and awareness that is rhythm analytically oriented with a sound mirroring through Indian science and philosophy. Yet, two different sets of objectives steer the project. The first, cognitive, refers to the acquisition and handling of knowledge with reference to the research topic. The second, its handing over to the scientific community, which, being simultaneously an objective and a strategy, is detailed in the methodology.

2. 1. To reconstitute LAPS personal, social, scientific and professional biography

- a) tracing his academic and scientific life through the countries where he lived (Portugal, Belgium, France, India, Brazil)
- b) identifying the scientific and philosophical connections and influences that he welcomed
- c) addressing the dearth of knowledge about LAPS "oriental" connections
- d) locating the La Rythmanalyse book and critically editing it

2. 2. To produce a comprehensive view of the trends converging to the rhythm analytic approach relocating its therapeutic endeavour on the context of its radiating developments.

- a) identifying the major intellectual circles in Europe, India and Brazil, reconstituting the intellectual atmosphere between 1910-1930, focusing the "invisible colleges"
- b) analysing the modes of knowledge transfer at the time in those geographical areas, searching the overlapping scientific contexts and focusing on their intertwining
- c) inviting fresh insights to our understanding of how scientific ideas emerge, circulate and are validated, screening the stochastic processes on the knowledge production in general and scientific knowledge in particular

2. 3. To diachronically ascertain the permeable points to Asian influence of the scientific community in general and of Bachelard in particular.

- a) determining the seemingly Indian influence on the energetic and vibratory conception of reality in LAPS and Bachelard
- b) bringing into the conceptual and methodological play the theory of *karma*, for articulating the rhythm analytic project from a different theoretical system.

2. 4. To set out an inclusive framework of rhythm in therapeutic landscapes

- a) disclosing the tenets of ayurvedic rhythmology

b) exploring its synchronic and diachronic connections with other rhythm based therapies in the euroasiatic area.

Though scientifically the project is goal oriented and focused on specific objectives, institutionally there is a meta-goal endowing the project with the uniqueness of a pilot project (along with the Euroasiatic Research Centre) appraising the receptivity for the creation of an Institute for Indian Studies on Science and Philosophy. This pilot venture in Portuguese scientific scenario, testing heteropraxies and innovative methodological and epistemological hypothesis, shall pave the way for a definitive step in the future formulations and articulations of epistemological commitments.

3. LINE OF DEVELOPMENT

3. 1. Research methodology

The project, leaving aside the emic hegemony of European knowledge, endeavours the attempt of considering that we are not higher on the hierarchy of knowledge, because, probably there is no hierarchy. The history of science (and of philosophy as well) is taken here as a cluster enclosing different and varied moments in time, different and varied places in space, different and varied areas in knowledge.

The attempt to make intelligible the rhythmanalysis trajectory will vary the levels and types of analysis. Even if the starting point will be seemingly cautioned by a history and sociology of scientific knowledge, based on and supported by archives, the project will move to raise the rhythmanalytic cluster as a case for study, as an observatory for the western practice of science and its mediation with non-western science.

That cluster appears with **a)** a diachronic dimension within two periods apart 1. the early scientific milieu of LAPS (1910-1930) and of his own scientific production and 2. its present radiation (1990/2011); **b)** a diatopic extension (Europe, India, Brazil); **c)** a multidisciplinary amplitude (physics, urbanism, architecture, literature, cinematography, philosophy, history, geography, psychology, pedagogy, training and anthropology). Then, the methodology, the theoretical underpinnings and the objectives of the research are a heterogeneous body.

Three different ranks have to be distinguished in this project since they decide the methodological choices: from the plain survey of the *rhythmologic* cluster (both in old and new science) to its bridging with ayurvedic field, and to its final dissemination. Then, LAPS, Bachelard or Ayurveda are not to be taken here in their apparent distinctiveness but as clusters of knowledge, attitudes, choices, etc, interacting or merging with other clusters – individuals or institutions, events or spaces. For that reason, the approach, following a *systemic* method that intertwines different disciplinary domains irrespective of their time, space or knowledge area, will not be strictly interdisciplinary but clearly multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary, with diversification of intervention methodologies intertwining conventional and atypical. Accordingly, three different sets of methodology will be engaged. The first two (a, b) meant for the practical management of the research: one for accessing information, acquiring and building knowledge, another for its general dissemination. The third (c) intended for its conceptual management.

A. Field and documentary research into the European, Indian and Brazilian archives and media, to find all possible elements to reconstitute the diversity of LAPS intellectual atmospheres, for reconstructing a correspondent life experience by means of which events, dispersed throughout different time and space zones, are connected, revealing unnoticed connectivity.

B. Disseminating strategy

1. To endorse a convergent approach with all the involved bodies for the management of collected data, exploring its possible propagating modes.

2. To diffuse the previous and present acquired knowledge and reflection by means of the deliverables such as international meetings and groupings, webnetworking, teaching seminars and publications.

3. To prompt a web platform, as an integral and central part of the collecting and disseminating methodology, moving from a static data corpus to its instrumentation as dynamic knowledge.

C. Theoretical managing strategy

1. Systemic approach of the subject will take each geographic and temporal zone, each scientific, academic and lay community as a cluster for disclosing the systemic dimension of the rhythmanalytic proposal.

2. Serendipity is the most accurate policy for responding to Bachelard's redressing of procedural commitments: *It is by closing the eyes that one prepares to see.*¹ Welcoming sudden and unexpected events, so as to avoid the rigidity that the saturation of the methodological play entails, it gives potential for creativity and imagination, better answering to the stochastic nature of the cognitive production.

3. Web syndication will proceed to the most of the web3 technology creating a web platform for the rhythmanalytic project. Since accumulated, stored and de-contextualized knowledge is no longer knowledge, the web syndication will press forward its appropriation and internalisation, intertwining it with those drawn in. The **use** of knowledge endows it with new meanings, shapes it into new forms and pours it into practices, leaving the academic arena to answer to individual and social needs and aspirations.

4. Case-sensitive translation for finding footbridges of intelligibility and communication beyond the strictly linguistic settings, avoiding the negotiations on differences at stake (of dissimilar images and experiences of the world) that bleach the passage of the different to the same.

5. Comparative approach, whose challenges of "comparing the incomparable" (as Detienne phrases it), turning over incommensurability, will be fully tackled by this project. For that reason, if on the theoretical scope a comparative research will be endorsed, on the praxic scope it will evolve towards a **bridging research** because the meeting between different epistemological paradigms calls a space for their active coming together assigning them a place in a global landscape

6. The theory of karman, epistemological model fully attempted in Indian philosophy and epistemology, not percolated yet into "western" explicative systems, will be used as an experimental explanatory model for elucidating the *"inertial factors wedging the vibration of our being"* (DR, p. 161.) housing them as the power of the "fruit of the act" (*karmic theory*). It may give full potential for moving from *"matters of fact"* to *"matters of concern"* (Latour) and will show that Bachelard's appropriation of rhythmanalysis gives room to exercise its accommodation.

3. 2. Development management

The first year will be more focused on field and documentary research of the involved period for solidly establishing the scientific environment of rhythmanalysis.

The second year, through and down the web, human and institutional network of collaborators and partners already established, will proceed to organize the scientific meetings, to a teaching seminar on *Indian Epistemology* at the UL and to the creation of the **Observatory for Indian Epistemological Systems** in India.

The third year will involve some field and documentary research to collect data on the ayurvedic rhythmology (namely the rhythm based pulse reading technology, *nāḍiparikṣa*), building a strong crossknowledge on local and non-local rhythm based therapies. Also with a teaching seminar on *Indian Medical Systems* at the UL. Individual seminars, workshops and papers on the on-going research will be handled throughout the project duration.

¹ *Idéalisme discursif* in *Recherches Philosophiques*, 1936, p. 28.

3. 3. Prospective outcome

The project may raise different states of affairs ranging from the awareness of a wider, systemic, enfolding connectivity of the modes of construction, preservation, transmission of scientific knowledge and practices to the sensitizing of the scientific community to the euroasiatic field of research. The project expects also to open dissemination gateways fit for transversal transfer of knowledge in the involved fields, reinforcing scientific networks between Europe, India and Brasil.

It is expected that besides the logistic support, the host institutions will back the research not only sharing the excellent competence of their members, making available the already existing networks, helping with the creation of new ones, as will contribute, on the practical level, to its execution co-organising the scientific meetings, and, with the CFCUL, editing the planned publications, hosting the research line on Comparative Studies on Epistemology and Philosophy of science and the webportal for Paul Masson-Oursel.

3. 4. Expected impact

The project is oriented for turning over new knowledge to the host institution, introducing the research team of the CFCUL to the comparative research in transcultural area within a collaborative framework. Thus, it shall also pave the way in forging important scholarly contacts, widening the spectrum of lectures and courses, programmes, multiplying the multilateral academic networks, coupled with an important scientific intervention in areas not yet attempted in the Portuguese academic milieu.

In addition to the collection of data on rhythmanalysis milieus and productions, the project encourages the receptivity for the creation of a transversal body for Indian Studies for cross-fertilization of knowledge, practices and experiences with transfer in many directions, not one way. In this manner, to generate new knowledge and new understanding on the epistemological therapeutic issues of the rhythmanalytic approach will make a significant impact. Moreover, as today Europe is reshaping its own self-image through a global alien inflow, this project hopes to contribute to the academic debate on it, developing transcultural methodologies.

In fact, ERA, JTI and EIT are strongly inviting to improve links between researchers across countries and between different kind of academic and non-academic institutions, hopefully contributing to broad the old etic view with emic ones. Naturally, crosscultural comparative studies can bring extra value to European research efforts in the realm of creativity and innovation. Collaboration with experts across Europe, will instil new and fresh competence in areas already saturated by old patterns. Such collaboration can introduce new patterns, new values and new attitudes, if not inducing changes at large, at least refreshing solidified structures.