

Ritual as Space of Serenity? Resonance and the Dialectic between Identity and Non-Identity

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Topic

My project is interested in the connection between ritual and resonance from a political point of view. If alienation in modern and therefore accelerating societies is caused by the increased loss of stable resonance-axes and if rituals are able to create and maintain axes of resonance, as Rosa both states in „Resonanz“ (Rosa 2016), then rituals have a political potential. That means, that they could be the place to get into resistance to the ongoing processes of reification and therefore the ‘breeding ground’ for the ‘resonance-revolution’ to a ‘post-growth-society’, that Rosas concept is aiming at. Following that thought, this project is a philosophical reflection of the theoretical framework between Ritual, Resonance, Unattainability (Unverfügbarkeit) and the critical, normative, emancipatory and political intentions of the resonance theory (social transformation to a post-growth-society).

Research Questions

What is the theoretical connection between the Ritual, Resonance and Unattainability (Unverfügbarkeit) within the resonance-theory and how is this framework connected to its political aspects (critique, emancipation and social transformation)?

Are there general terms and conditions under which the ritual could be a stabilizing ‘frame’, that allows to get easier into an attitude of openness and vulnerability for the resonance event, that itself stays (and has to stay) unattainable (‘unverfügbar’)?

Is it also possible, that the „same“ ritual also could be understood as a space where individuals could strengthen their ability to resonate in and not against an alienated society? And which kind of effect, would this ambivalence between affirmation and critique have for the normative and critical aspects of the resonance theory itself?

Results

Confronting Hartmut Rosa’s thoughts with the ideas of T.W. Adorno, it gets doubtful, whether Rosa's theory of resonance is – as he states – in advance to concepts of the “older” Critical Theory.

By misunderstanding Adorno as „gloomy-pessimistic“, the question arises as to how far Rosas theory involuntarily executes exactly the metamorphosis from critique to affirmation, that Adorno is trying to avoid with his negative dialectics. To avoid that, the resonance-concept has to deal with the reasons that lead Adorno to his methodology.

Rosa's biographically based ‘commitment’ to the communitarian form of social criticism and Taylor's philosophical anthropology ultimately undermines the motivational concern of resonance theory to change society to the better.

Instead of the ideal definition of the ritual being a space for resonance and social transformation, which I aimed for in the beginning of the project, my dissertation became a comprehensive critique of these kinds of idealistic and positivistic approaches, including the one of Hartmut Rosa.

Next Steps

After almost three years of intensive study of the topic, I am now in the final stage of my dissertation. The work is completely (re-)conceptualized, the final structure is in place and the reading-work is completed. The development of most chapters is well advanced, most of the notes are sorted and incorporated. To sum it up: I'm currently enjoying writing as a process of putting together a big puzzle that I have been working on in small pieces for years.

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