

RESONANCE EMPOWERED BY CHRISTIANITY¹

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Abstract

The purpose of this article is to understand the modern world better and to find what theology can contribute to it. Modernity has brought about many achievements for human beings, but they can be ambivalent in nature, sometimes with pathological consequences. The theory of resonance is an approach by a German sociologist, Hartmut Rosa, and is one of the meaningful responses to the ambivalent situations of modernity. It focuses on individuals' ability to resonate in their life experiences. Its analysis of the modern society, which include Asian societies, and its proposals based on that analysis are very convincing, but some critical reflections from theological perspectives can provide a useful complement to the theory. The essay will use approaches from sociology and theology in order to access the resonance theory. The dialogue with theology shows that theology sheds light on the meaning of pain and suffering in the human realities of evil and death, which the theory seems to neglect. It can bring about solidarity through prayers and offer a suitable pastoral approach. By enabling rethinking about time as a creation of God, theology can drive out fear against the phenomenon of acceleration and can help human beings to live out the present and to meet God in this very moment in life. Moreover, theology adds the dimension of transcendence to life. On the other hand, Rosa's concept of resonance provides an occasion for these theological reflections and helps one to rethink the modern-day pastoral approach for people, believers and non-believers alike. In other words, confronting this

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theory helps Christianity to be more open to the modern world and to understand it better. It is hoped that the essay will further the dialogue of the theory with theology and the thoughts from other traditions such as in Asia.

Keywords:

the ambivalence of modernity, the theory of resonance, Hartmut Rosa, acceleration, the good life

INTRODUCTION

Modernity has brought about many achievements for human beings, but those achievements can be ambivalent in nature. Some of them have pathological consequences. Moreover, it is not just a problem for some developed countries in the West. Asian countries, especially the people in westernized, metropolitan areas, are heavily affected by these consequences. In fact, it is hardly possible to find areas on earth where the effects of modernity have not reached. Human beings in modern times are enjoying its fruits on the one hand, but under its pressure on the other hand.

The theory of resonance by a German sociologist, Hartmut Rosa, is one of the meaningful responses to these ambivalent situations of modernity. It focuses on individuals' ability to resonate in their life experiences. Its analysis of the modern society and its proposals based on that analysis are very convincing, but some critical reflections from theological perspectives can provide a useful complement to the theory.

In the following pages, this essay will first introduce the theory of resonance. For that, it will briefly describe the situation of the modern society and will then move on to a detailed explanation of the theory. After that, critical reflection on the theory from theological perspectives will follow. That discussion will justify the grounds on which religious, theological reflections are or can be applied in

order to critique the theory. Before the conclusion, it will briefly comment on the Daoist thinking, which can show a possibility of an encounter of the resonance theory with the traditional thoughts and philosophies in Asia. Finally, the essay will conclude by commenting on the significance of the theory in itself and for theology as well.

METHOD

This article is a critical review from a theological perspective on a theory in the field of sociology. By ‘critical’, it is meant to view the theory for both its strengths and weaknesses. It is an interdisciplinary study between theology and sociology, and briefly the Daoist thinking. In order to conduct this study, the concepts and perspectives of the theory were firstly presented. Then, the theory was qualitatively evaluated from theological perspective to complement its weaknesses. The article ends with indicating the significance of the theory. This interdisciplinary study attempts to make theology more relevant to every day life as well as to add the dimension of transcendence to the sociological theory, through theological insights, for fuller understanding of human life. It also indicates potentials of encounter with the traditional Asian thoughts.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Theory of Resonance

The Modern Society

The (late) modern society shows many aspects, such as medicalization, desacralization (along with sacralization), individualization, digitalization, and economization.² It emphasizes on the one hand the rationality of human beings and on the other hand the subjectivity of individuals. These phenomena are ambivalent, and therefore one cannot simply judge whether they are positive or negative per se.³ One of the ambivalent phenomena in the modern

² Vogt, M. – Gigl, M. (Hg.), *Christentum und moderne Lebenswelten. Ein Spannungsfeld voller Ambivalenzen* (Gesellschaft - Ethik - Religion 19) (Paderborn: Brill Schöningh, 2022) XVIII – XXV.

³ Gert Pickel calls the relationship of the church to this ambivalent world ‘Spannungsfeld mit Möglichkeiten’. – Vogt, M., ‘Christliche Sozialethik als Auseinandersetzung mit den

world is acceleration.⁴ Hartmut Rosa, begins his book on the theory of resonance with the sentence “*Wenn Beschleunigung das Problem ist, dann ist Resonanz vielleicht die Lösung.*” In other words, he puts forward the theory of resonance as a proposal to deal with the modern pathology of acceleration. Therefore, it may be useful to take a look briefly at the situation of the modern world.

Introducing Rosa’s interpretation, Römelt diagnoses modern culture, comparing it with depression.⁵ As in the case of a patient with depression, human beings experience alienation in modern culture due to the paralysed and broken relationship with life. They are encouraged to live out the modern values of autonomy and authenticity, but they are not on a firm ground, because their inner core, based on which the autonomy and authenticity ought to stand, is itself elusive and changeable.⁶ They live under constant pressure of competition and are exposed to burnout.⁷ They are trapped in an endless circle of seeking promised happiness in vain and end up in exhaustion. These are circumstances which can easily lead to

Ambivalenzen der Moderne’, in *Christentum und moderne Lebenswelten. Ein Spannungsfeld voller Ambivalenzen*, Vogt, M. – Gigl, M. (Hg.) (Gesellschaft - Ethik - Religion 19), (Paderborn: Brill Schöningh, 2022) 15.

⁴ The logic of acceleration is in the social structure of capitalism and democracy and even has become part of human subjectivity in modern societies, ‘from power naps and speed-reading to quality time and play dates’. – D’Ambrosio, P.J., ‘The Good Life Today. A Collaborative Engagement between Daoism and Hartmut Rosa’, in *Dao*, Vol.19 (1) (2020) 55-56.; Social acceleration has three forms, i.e., technological, social and life-pace. – Lombaard, C., ‘Spiritualityd...Spirituality in our Time – in Conversation with Hartmut Rosa’s Theory on Social Acceleration’, in *Hervormde Teologiese Studies*, Vol.74 (3) (2018) 5. For the ways these three forms of acceleration are intertwined and the three external motors, i.e. the economic motor, the social structural motor and the cultural motor, see Reed, I.A., ‘Hartmut Rosa’s Project for Critical Theory’, in *Thesis Eleven*, Vol.133 (1) (2016) 123-124.

⁵ Römelt, J., *Erfüllung im Diesseits* (Freiburg: Herder, 2021) 143-152.

⁶ As will be presented below, one of the characteristics of resonance relationships is that they allow both the subject and the world to be mutually changed or transformed by their encounter. According to Rosa, this openness helps overcome an essentialist approach to one’s identity or authenticity. – Rosa, H., *Resonanz. Eine Soziologie der Weltbeziehung* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2019) 312-315.

⁷ ‘[A] structural requirement of modern, capitalist societies’ demands ‘growth, acceleration, and innovation’ to reach ‘dynamic stabilization’, which leads to a ‘burning up of the atmosphere and to a burning out of individuals’. – Torres F. and Rosa, H., ‘Acceleration Theory, Temporal Regimes, and Politics Today. An Interview with Hartmut Rosa’, in *Res Publica*, Vol.24 (3) (2021) 519-520.

psychological depression, but, sadly, which are also almost a default situation for human beings in the modern world.

Rosa himself presents eight theses⁸ about the dynamics of the modern world which must be addressed by his theory of resonance. By the theses, he criticises the deep-running phenomena in the modern world that drive people to a ceaseless race against time and to constant competition, growth, innovation, and expansion. In response to that, Rosa puts forward the last thesis, the thesis of resonance, as a prerequisite for overcoming the issues of the modern world.

Furthermore, in the theory of resonance, a “contact” with one’s own feelings and inner core, in other words, “the sensibility of resonance”, would be a remedy for this modern malady. A very poignant part is that this resonance sensibility is in line with the tendency in modern society where individuals are seriously considered. Indeed, Römelt acknowledges the achievements or contribution of modernity, such as ideas of human rights and dignity, self-determination, human freedom, and all forms of liberation and democracy.⁹ In this sense, a purpose of turning to the theory of resonance is in order to overcome the pressing unrest and burden of modernity by making use of the very fruit of modernity.

The Theory of Resonance

The theory of resonance takes intersubjectivity as a basic social structure. It sees the social reality as a fabric of nets of interactions, within which one builds one’s identity in meeting with others.¹⁰ It complements this view with a phenomenological view of the relationship with the world (*Weltbeziehung*).¹¹ As Heidegger and

⁸ Rosa, H., ‘Gelingendes Leben in der Beschleunigungsgesellschaft. Resonante Weltbeziehungen als Schlüssel zur Überwindung der Eskalationsdynamik der Moderne’, in *Zu schnell für Gott?*. Theologische Kontroversen zu Beschleunigung und Resonanz (Freiburg – Basel – Wien: Herder, 2017) 19-34. The eight theses are as follows: 1) *Modernthese*, 2) *Fortschrittsthese*, 3) *Erste Autonomiethese*, 4) *Zweite Autonomiethese*, 5) *Wettbewerbsthese*, 6) *Burnouthese*, 7) *Surfer-, Drifter- und Terroristenthese*, 8) *Die Resonanzthese*.

⁹ Römelt, 158-159.

¹⁰ Römelt, 153-154.

¹¹ Römelt, 155.

Merleau-Ponty describe, human beings are born already in the condition of ‘*In-der-Welt-Sein*’ or ‘*être-au-monde*’. In this context, it is not that a conscious subject perceives a world which is pre-made, but ‘the presence of world’ and ‘subjective experience’ relate to each other mutually through the event of resonance. Merleau-Ponty emphasises the corporeal nature of the subject’s encounter with the world, and Bernhard Waldenfels focuses on the responsivity of human beings in their relationship with the world.¹²

From this worldview, Rosa presents his theory of resonance. Resonance is “*eine Beziehung zwischen zwei (oder mehreren) Objekten oder Körpern, die den aus der Physik gewonnenen Relationseigenschaften entspricht. [...] [Ein] Modus des **In-der-Welt-Seins**, das heißt eine spezifische Art und Weise des In-Beziehung-Tretens zwischen Subjekt und Welt. [...] **aufeinander antwortend**, zugleich auch **mit eigener Stimme sprechend***”.¹³ It is “not an emotion but a mode of relation”¹⁴. This refers to a relationship which one makes with other people or objects. It also refers to a relationship in which calling and answering with one’s own voices take place, instead of simply echoing and repeating what was said.¹⁵ Rosa also maintains that, in resonance, concepts such as mind and body, feelings and reason, and individuals and community, which were strictly separated in the Enlightenment and rationalism, are closely linked.¹⁶ In its own way, one can say again that Rosa’s resonance theory originated from modernity and, at the same time, tries to

¹² Rosa, *Resonanz*, 61-70. However, unlike the phenomenological approach, which seeks universalizable aspects and conditions of human being’s relationship to the world, Rosa is interested in how relationships are shaped by the society. – Rosa, *Resonanz*. 70. This perspective of Rosa makes it possible to consider how the society can help individuals to be better disposed to resonance experiences. For example, Rosa emphasises how important schools can be for children to develop their disposition towards the world. Experiences in the classroom, which, as will be explained later, stand on the diagonal axis of resonance, can function either as a space of alienation or as a space of resonance. – Rosa, *Resonanz*, 402-420.

¹³ Rosa, *Resonanz*, 285. Emphasis from the author.

¹⁴ Rosa, *Resonanz*, 288. ‘Resonanz ist kein Gefühlszustand, sondern ein Beziehungsmodus.’

¹⁵ According to Rosa, human beings have an ability for resonance relationship from birth. Hence, it is not something that needs to be culturally cultivated. – Rosa, ‘Gelingendes Leben’, 40.

¹⁶ Rosa, *Resonanz*, 293.

overcome modernity's problems.

Resonance is the opposite of alienation. Alienation is a specific mode of relationship with the world, in which the subject experiences the world as indifferent, repulsive, mute, and unconnected.¹⁷ Borrowing Jaeggi's expression, it is "a relation of relationlessness (*Beziehung der Beziehungslosigkeit*)"¹⁸. In alienation, the subject loses contact with the world and feels no relation to it. The world does not speak to him or her. For example, depression, which is a form of alienation, is different from sadness. The latter is a state fully affected by one's experience. In contrast, in the former there are no tears to be shed and the relationship with the world is hardened like a stone.¹⁹

In the mode of resonance relation, there are four characteristics²⁰:

1) Being affected (*Das Moment der Berührung – Affizierung*): It is an inner experience of being called and touched.

2) Self-efficacy (*Das Moment der Selbstwirksamkeit – Antwort*): It is an experience of one's own voice²¹ being heard and answered.

3) Adaptive transformation (*Das Moment der Anverwandlung – Transformation*): It is one's response in this exchange by being ready to be transformed.²²

4) Uncontrollability (*Das Moment der Unverfügbarkeit*)²³: It is an

¹⁷ Rosa, *Resonanz*, 306. Rosa compares alienation to depression or burnout. – Rosa, *Resonanz*, 316.

¹⁸ Rosa, *Resonanz*, 305.

¹⁹ Rosa, *Resonanz*, 309.

²⁰ Rosa, H., *The Uncontrollability of the World*, trans. by James C. Wagner (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2020) 31-39.

²¹ Since resonance relationship presupposes encounter with one's own voice, the subject must be open enough to be affected by the encounter as well as closed enough to be oneself.

²² In this transformation, as well, one needs to be both open and closed in order to be a subject. "We must be *open enough* to be affected or changed, while at the same time we must also be *closed off enough* to respond effectively with our own voice." – Rosa, *The Uncontrollability of the World*, 35.

²³ This is an important element of resonance. It will be explained in the following.

essential characteristic of resonance that it can neither be forced nor can its outcome be anticipated.

Furthermore, resonance has three axes: horizontal, diagonal, and vertical.²⁴

1) Horizontal axis: the dimension of resonance relation in human society where one can meet the others without competition or fear of being a loser. It includes the relationship with family and friends or in political engagements.

2) Diagonal axis: It is a dimension of resonance relation which one can have with things. Against the modern, Western societies' position of 'the radical reification of the non-human world (*Die radiakle Verdinglichung der nicht-menschlichen Welt*)', this axis of resonance attempts to hear the voice of the things. One can have resonance experience in things, works, or schools, for example. One distinctive aspect of this axis is that it needs a material mediation (*stoffliche Vermittlung*). For instance, if one has a passion for baking bread and finds a resonance experience in this activity, the person needs the materials, such as wheat and water, in order to perform the activity through which he or she has that experience.

3) Vertical axis: It is a dimension of resonance relation which reflects one's inner world and outer world. The outer world comes to the person as a collective singular, as if a subject to whom the person can relate. One can have resonance experience on this axis in religion, nature, art or history. For example, for a believer of a religion, on this axis the world comes to the person as an answering God or divine being. Rosa further mentions that nature, art, and history, seen as collective singulars respectively, came to form a vertical axis only in modernity.

One more important aspect of resonance which needs further comment is its uncontrollability. The human beings in modernity would like to have things under control. There are four dimensions of controllability²⁵: 1) *Making it visible, expanding our knowledge of what is there*; 2) *Making it physically reachable or accessible*; 3)

²⁴ Rosa, *Resonanz*, 341-514.

²⁵ Rosa, *The Uncontrollability of the World*, 15-18.

Making it manageable; and 4) *Making it useful*. These are the ways by which a person has things or situations under control. However, ever since the dawn of modernity, the more human beings have strived to achieve control over things, the more the situations have been beyond control. Rosa gives an example that the anti-theft lock in a car can malfunction and trap the owner of the car helplessly inside.²⁶ Digitalisation and technical developments enable many situations to be controlled by human beings. Paradoxically, though, the security measures intended to minimise damage can cause inconvenience for the very owner of the system and can put the person into an uncontrollable situation. In contrast, one does not strive to gain control over an experience in resonance experience. However, the experience of resonance is not an experience of total uncontrollability, because, in order to experience resonance, one must have access to counterparts, whether persons or things. For example, if one wants to experience a moment of deep, resonant friendship, he or she needs to have a friend, above all, and to have a point of contact with that friend. If one wishes to resonate with a piece of music, he or she needs to have an access to that music, whether by a CD player or by a concert ticket. No one can resonate with a song which he or she never knew of or cannot listen to. Therefore, the uncontrollability in Rosa's resonance theory refers rather to a "semicontrollability" (*Halbverfügbarkeit*)²⁷ which leaves room both for controlled access to and for the inherent uncontrollability of the experience. One meets with the counterpart. However, for resonance to take place in this bilateral relationship of calling and responding, there must be a room for mystery or the unknown, a dimension which will not be exhausted. Any attempt to control the outcome inevitably leads to a muteness of resonance. When the unknown is gone, resonance experience is also no more.

Critical Reflection on Resonance from a Theological Perspective

²⁶ Rosa, *The Uncontrollability of the World*, 111.

²⁷ Rosa, *The Uncontrollability of the World*, 40-59. Rosa comments that '[t]he basic conflict of modernity' is in 'mistaking reachability for controllability'. – Rosa, *The Uncontrollability of the World*, 57. In other words, having access to a person or a thing in order to have a possibility of resonance experience does not mean having whole control over the person or the thing.

Resonance and Religion in Rosa's Theory

Rosa's resonance theory is a sociological proposal. Therefore, commenting on the theory from a theological perspective might not do it justice, at a first glance. However, religion, which he presents as standing on the vertical axis of resonance, is an important realm wherein one can experience resonance even in modern societies. He posits three reasons why religion is still important in the late modern world: 1) Human beings have a deep desire for a vertical experience of resonance, 2) God in theology, philosophy of religion, or religion studies is a God who enters into a dialogue with human beings, 3) Religion can provide late modern society with an alternative world, instead of a world obsessed with growth, optimization, and acceleration. Seeing the weight of religion in his theory, it can be justified that a critical review on the theory can be approached from a theological perspective.²⁸

Moreover, the theory of resonance is based on an analysis of the modern societies, but it is essentially aiming at the question of the good life 'against a broken promise of modernity'.²⁹ In this sense, it may meaningfully engage in a dialogue with theology and religion. Furthermore, the critical sharing of views will be complementary and enriching for both sociology and theology and will, as well, have implications for a pastoral approach to the faithful in Church praxes.³⁰

²⁸ In addition, Kläden points out some elements in the resonance theory, which can be favorably treated in the religious studies. For example, Rosa puts forward the theory as a hope for the remedy. This undertone of hope can be well linked to theological aspects. The concept of the resonance theory based on 'relationship' is not familiar to 'a thought of a personal God' in theology. Finally, absence of resonance can explain dissatisfaction and disappointment in the church life. – Kläden, T., 'Hartmut Rosa als Gesprächspartner für die Theologie', in *Pastoraltheologie*, Vol. 107 (9) (Aug 2018) 395-397.; Especially for the Christian theology, according to Christiane Burbach, the concept of Perichoresis, which explains the loving relationship in the Trinity, can offer a good theological understanding for resonance. – Tilman, K., 'Die Resonanztheorie von Hartmut Rosa: Ein inspirierender Dialog zwischen Soziologie, Pastoralpsychologie und Theologie', in *Wege zum Menschen*, Vol. 71 (5) (2019) 432-433.

²⁹ Lijster T., Celikates R. and Rosa, H., 'Beyond the Echo-chamber. An Interview with Hartmut Rosa on Resonance and Alienation', in *Krisis*, Vol. 39 (1) (2019) 63-64.; Resonance as alienation's other and as a concept for the good life, see also Rosa, H., 'Dynamic Stabilization, the Triple A. Approach to the Good Life, and the Resonance Conception', in *Questions de communication*, 2017, Vol. 31 (1) (2017) 449-453.

³⁰ Bucher comments positively that theology can learn current topics of the society from

The Dark Dimensions of Evil and Death in Human Reality

Bucher points out that Rosa's theory of resonance lacks a dimension of evil and death.³¹ Borrowing Charles Taylor's comments, he observes that the modern humanism regards death only as negation.³² From the human point of view, it is nothing but a deficit. Therefore, for a positive experience of resonance, death and pain have no place.³³ Although Rosa himself stresses the uncontrollability of resonance experience³⁴, scholars such as Nassehi and Heidenreich are critical

Rosa's theory. — Bucher, R., 'Was erlöst?. Die Theologie angesichts soziologischer (Welt-) Frömmigkeit in spätkapitalistischen Zeiten', in *Zu schnell für Gott?. Theologische Kontroversen zu Beschleunigung und Resonanz* (Freiburg — Basel — Wien: Herder, 2017) 331; Fuchs is hopeful that the theory of resonance, with its possibilities for mutual transformation and complemented by the meanings of intercessory prayers and solidarity, can have wider implications even for ecumenical and inter-religious matters, as well as for non-Christians. — Fuchs, O., 'Beschleunigung aus der Perspektive eschatologischer Zeitpastoral. Theologische Aspekte von Entfremdung und Resonanz', in *Zu schnell für Gott?. Theologische Kontroversen zu Beschleunigung und Resonanz* (Freiburg — Basel — Wien: Herder, 2017) 143-145 and 148-152.

³¹ Bucher, 321-322.

³² In other words, it lacks a transcendent dimension, which has a scope for the reality beyond earthly life.

³³ A horrifying example is that National Socialism provided a fantasy resonance space without disharmony for many years for the German people. — Bucher, 320.

³⁴ '*Das Schweigen Gottes und seine Nicht-Verstehbarkeit oder Unerforschlichkeit [...] sie werden ihm zu Manifestationen der für Resonanz konstitutiven Unverfügbarkeit. Mehr noch, geradezu dadurch kann Religion als das Versprechen verstanden werden, dass die Welt oder das Universum oder Gott auch dann zu uns spricht, wenn wir sie nicht zu hören vermögen, wenn uns alle Resonanzachsen verstummt sind.*' — Rosa, 'Gelingendes Leben', 47-48. Emphasis from the author. To understand religion thus as "promise" is valid in a Christian point of view, as, for example, Abraham's faith in God's promise manifests (cf. Gen 12,1-9; Rom 4,13-25; Heb 6,15). In this way, Rosa's theory focuses heavily on "resonance", which "is promised", in my understanding. However, on the other side of a promise of God is a hope for God (cf. 1 Cor 1,3-11). Hope is not as tangible or concrete as promise, and it is not seen, but it constitutes an essential element in faith life (Rom 8,24-25). Alienation experiences in pain and suffering are not to be simply dismissed for the sake of the promise of resonance, but must be endured in hope in God. In fact, there are people who were justified by faith but who did not receive, in their earthly life, what was promised (cf. Heb 11,35-40; and there are many examples of martyrs for the faith in the past or victims of injustice throughout human history). Moreover, in biblical tradition, suffering has an intrinsic meaning in one's relationship with God (cf. Deut 8,2-5; Ps 140; Prov 24,10-14; Isa 50,10-11; Hab 3,17-19; Mk 9,14-29; Mk 13,1-37; Rom 8,18-25; 2 Thes 1,1-12; Heb 12,1-13; and the book of Job). It has a disciplinary or educational purpose, fosters hopes and faith in God alone,

of this theory, observing that it seems constantly to force people into resonance experience instead of letting it happen naturally.³⁵ On the other hand, Bucher emphasises that the Christian theology is thoroughly realistic.³⁶ It does not deny pain and sorrow, which are part of the human experiences of life. As is well known, the Christian symbol is the cross. Human sinfulness is not silenced or hidden in the reality of human beings in this theological understanding. In fact, the Christian God is “the Lord of life and the Victor over death, devils and evil”, and therefore He “embraces and exceeds both of them”.³⁷ Schüßler comments on how a small and accidental event in life can turn out to be a life-changing moment, instead of an intensive experience, and how Christian faith-life consists of seeking God in darkness or of feeling a non-responsive, distant God.³⁸ Furthermore, paradoxically, Fuchs talks about “the resonance of pains” (*die Resonanz des Schmerzens*).³⁹ It is the resonance experience of those deeply steeped in pain and agony.

In response to this, alienation in the theory of resonance may be useful to ponder upon. As “a relation of relationlessness”⁴⁰ it resembles the experience of the absence of God in the faith journey. Rosa mentions the role of alienation in children’s growth into adulthood and in cultivating one’s own voice.⁴¹ According to him,

and is an occasion for a believer to be strengthened, healed or renewed by God or an occasion for the manifestation of His power; it has eschatological significance, as well as being given as punishment at times both for believers and their enemies. In my view, what is / should be critically commented upon regarding Rosa’s theory above is its lack of attention to the intrinsic meaning of alienation experiences.

³⁵ Bucher, 325.

³⁶ Bucher, 326.

³⁷ Bucher, 327.

³⁸ Schüßler, M., ‘Beschleunigungsapokalyptik und Resonanzutopien. Eine Theologische Kritik der Zeit- und Sozialphilosophie Hartmut Rosas’, in *Zu schnell für Gott? Theologische Kontroversen zu Beschleunigung und Resonanz* (Freiburg – Basel – Wien: Herder, 2017) 169-170.

³⁹ Fuchs, 137-140. Fuchs cites a poem by Ingeborg Bachmann, ‘Die gestundete Zeit’.

⁴⁰ See footnote #.18.

⁴¹ “*Entfremdung*“ in diesem Sinne ist nicht nur eine zentrale Voraussetzung für die Entwicklung von Wissenschaft und Technik oder für die Anwendung des Rechts im modernen Verständnis, sondern stellt insbesondere in der

children develop their relationship to the world in which alienation, in a sense as a distancing from the world, helps them to develop their own voice. For a metaphor, he points out that the body of a string instrument must be closed to some extent in order to be able to produce a sound.⁴² In this view, alienation is not just a pathological phenomenon but also plays a pedagogical role.

However, Rosa seems to perceive alienation only as either something to be overcome or as something just temporary. It may have some functions, but it has no intrinsic meaning. One has the impression in considering his theory that only resonance is what is ultimately to be achieved, although it is not under one's control. Thus, experiences of alienation lose their meaning. Within this position one may not fully understand the meaning of the dark and dry moments of one's life. However, those moments are not only precious parts of life but are also very real in Christian understanding.⁴³ Therefore, the points of criticism, from the theological perspective, together with its realistic standpoint, must be taken seriously as an element complementary to the theory.

Individualistic Leaning and Solidarity

As was mentioned above, the theory of resonance presupposes intersubjectivity and the mutual relationship between the subject and the world. In this worldview, the subject is not an isolated entity but is closely related to the other subjects and the world. The theory seeks a holistic approach⁴⁴ to the potentiality of successful life in one's encounter with the world, and it has, as well, social-structural implications.⁴⁵ For example, Rosa emphasises the importance of

Pubertät eine möglicherweise unverzichtbare Phase in der Entwicklung einer "eigenen Stimme" des Subjekts dar.' – Rosa, 'Gelingendes Leben', 40.

⁴² Rosa, 'Gelingendes Leben', 40. See also Römelt, 155-159 and footnotes ##.21 and 22.

⁴³ Cf. Footnote #.36.

⁴⁴ Römelt, 155-157; 161-162.

⁴⁵ Römelt, 160-162. See also Rosa, *Resonanz*, 55-56. Here, Römelt points out that Rosa turns to political, economic, or cultural dimensions for their concerted efforts for overcoming the problems of acceleration and for a different way of being-in-the-world for resonance experience.

schools where students learn not only the contents of textbooks but also a basic disposition towards the world. Depending on their experiences at school, some may develop a disposition more towards alienation, while others more towards resonance.⁴⁶ The social responsibility for the future of citizens is well illustrated by this example of school education.

However, what seems to be emphasised in his theory, in the end, is the personal, individual experience of resonance, no matter what the axes of the resonance are. One may experience resonance, the other may not. It is left to a person, after all. A question arises regarding what should be the role of fellow human beings for one another. What could be done for those who cannot lead a resonant way of life? Rosa does not seem to address the issue. To this possibly individualistic tendency the bond of solidarity can be a good counterbalance. For example, Fuchs emphasises the importance of intercessory prayer in Christianity, with which one prays for those who do not have a resonance experience. Such a prayer expresses hope in God who enables resonance. This is an act of solidarity for those who suffer.⁴⁷ Schüßler believes that pastoral care in this age must be focused not on engineering a scene of resonance but on fostering the ability to live out, in social networks, situations “without” answers. He has in mind a God who willingly comes into solidarity with human beings.⁴⁸

Rosa does not uphold the view that all experiences of the world should be those of resonance, observing that this would be “unrealistic and misleading”.⁴⁹ At the same time, he is optimistic that resonance experience can take place in various situations, although human beings do not have control over it.⁵⁰ As was shown above, Rosa has the whole

Rosa observes the social and structural problems of the modern society, and he urges reform and revolution for a way of life which is better disposed to the resonance relationship with the world.

⁴⁶ Rosa, *Resonanz*, 402-420. Cf. Footnote #.12.

⁴⁷ Fuchs, 142-143.

⁴⁸ Schüßler, 182-183.

⁴⁹ Rosa, *Resonanz*, 294-295.

⁵⁰ Cf. Rosa, *Resonanz*, 418-420. He acknowledges from the statistics that those who have more

society in view. The example of schools for individuals' cultivating of a disposition to the world shows elements of social responsibility for the well-being of members in society. However, in his approach it seems that the focus is on fostering *resonance* experience. If one did not have an opportunity to cultivate the right disposition, without his or her faults, it is still one's own responsibility to find places, persons, or activities to facilitate the experience of resonance. Social responsibility ends in the structural consideration and does not reach out to those who are left behind in a cold, unresponsive world. If this observation can be justified, solidarity is a key ingredient for its remedy. Solidarity is not a cheap feeling of pity but a deep recognition of our connections as creatures in the world. Moreover, from the theological, faith perspective, solidarity among human beings has also a divine dimension, because God Himself wants to be in solidarity with human beings. Then, not only human society but also the whole creation can be seen from a solidarity perspective.

Perspective on Time

The Christian God is the Creator of everything. The modern society has had many achievements, as well as some setbacks, and it is nonetheless God's creation, with human participation in it. Rosa's theory of resonance is proposed as a "remedy" to the acceleration of modern society. The time pressure on every member of the society is seen as a pathology of modernity that needs to be overcome. Time is the problem!

However, Schüßler questions this basic premise of Rosa's position and suggests the view that time is a gift of God, instead of a source of fear. According to him, "a future theology of time" (*eine kommende Theologie der Zeit*) can take three paths, among which he shows a preference for the third option.⁵¹ First, it can continue

access to education, in other words, better-off social groups, have more chances of being disposed to resonance experiences, but he also maintains that people of any stratum of the society and any social spheres have possibilities for resonance experience. On the one hand, in my opinion, this brings out the uncontrollable nature of resonance. Therefore, the socially under-privileged are not fundamentally barred from having resonance experience. On the other hand, though, it waters down the significance of the social responsibility for the members of the society to foster dispositions towards resonance or to create equal opportunities for it.

⁵¹ Schüßler, 179-183.

to follow the notion of time from the Enlightenment of modernity. In his view, Rosa's critical social philosophy stands on this path, with an 'uncontrollable resonance event' seen in the light of the negative dialectics of a utopian society. Second, it can go back to the mythological-metaphysical understanding of time. This is based on the view that "the religion is strongly linked to the eternal truth of the mythical". It is a nostalgic turnabout to the by-gone past. Finally, it can look to the risks of the present time as a precarious place of encounter with God. It is a resolute affirmation of finding God in the present, who comes to meet us 'today'. God is in the past and in the future, but it is the present where we have to meet Him. Human beings encounter various challenges in their experience of time, but God created the very time, as well, and therefore the time must not be seen as a threat but, rather, as a provider of precious moments of life, a gift of God.

I would interpret the first path as future-oriented, the second as past-oriented, and the third as present-oriented. Although human beings are influenced by the past and strive towards the future, it is ultimately the present that makes up one's life *here and now*. Rosa's theory of resonance helps people in the modern era to be more intensely engaged in life *here and now*, by allowing oneself both to be open enough for being affected by the world and to be closed enough to come up with one's own voice, and in so doing be better disposed to resonance experience. However, it is paradoxical that this theory, which upholds an intensive resonance experience of the *here and now*, seemingly emphasises the present but, in reality, can, rather, be geared towards a future promise of resonance experience. If only resonance experience is what makes one's life successful and meaningful, all those dark and dry moments of alienation in life can be treated as meaningless or as just temporary stages that must be overcome at all costs.⁵² This unbalanced and unrealistic view can be

⁵² This evaluation must be nuanced, because resonance does not simply mean harmony but means also a relationship of calling and answering, an experience of being touched and moved, which includes 'the resounding contradiction (*das tönende Widersprechen*)'. — Rosa, *Resonanz*, 369. My emphasis. However, resonance experience presupposes a responding counterpart, no matter what the response may be, whereas dark and dry moments of (faith) life usually involve a non-responsive world or God, in other words, an experience very similar to alienation. In the theory of resonance, alienation is something to be overcome, rather than something to be endured patiently or something that can evoke solidarity among human beings.

complemented by a renewed notion of time as a gift of God, which must be fully appreciated here and now, and of the aspects of our spiritual life and spirit of solidarity, which were described above.

RESONANCE AND DAOISM

D'Ambrosio introduces Daoist thinking, while comparing it with the approach of Rosa's resonance. As he explains, Daoist thinking does not approve instrumentization of life, nor is the goal of major importance. It upholds following the principles such as the natural pattern (*tian li*), non-action (*wu wie*), self-so (*ziran*), and knowing satisfaction (*zhi zu*). To gether with the aimless motion of *you* (rambling attitude) and genuine pretending, Daoist approach to the world 'can be seen as forms of doing resonance or creating a space for it', according to him.⁵³

This brief introduction to the Daoist thinking in relation to Rosa's resonance can indicate a possibility for an encounter between resonance theory and other Asian ways of thinking. Daoism was not originated as a response to the modern world, but its approach can also have significance to the challenges of it.

Moreover, Asian societies in modern times are not exempt from the challenges of the acceleration. Although there exist differences in different parts of the world, which come from their own histories and cultural traditions, 'a mode of dynamic stabilization' makes the acceleration a common problem of the modern societies.⁵⁴ Therefore, traditional thought from the region and an impulse from the theory of resonance can contribute to the healthy attitude towards the challenges by engaging in a dialogue between themselves.

CONCLUSION

There are many other pathological issues in the modern world apart from acceleration. Schüßler asks, since the theory of resonance is presented as a response and remedy to the problem of acceleration,

⁵³ D'Ambrosio, 59-65.

⁵⁴ Torres F. and Rosa, H., 520.

whether this theory would be enough to provide an answer for the various issues and phenomena in the modern society or not.⁵⁵ As was mentioned above, the modern world is complex and ambivalent. Therefore, to look for a theory or position as a solution for all the challenges in modern life would be an impossible quest.

However, the theory of resonance is a valid and meaningful approach to the modern world, because it is neither a blind continuation of the modern mythology of rationalism and optimism, nor a nostalgic return to the pre-modern society. It is both a fruit of modernity and a response coming from self-reflection on the very modernity. Modernity awakened individuals as subjects. To the extent that it achieved technical developments, it also caused an extreme reification of nature, and the industrial life styles it brought about have deepened the situation of alienation in many areas of life. Rosa proposes, very aptly, the theory of resonance in order to overcome alienation and, in so doing, to increase the possibilities for resonance experiences.⁵⁶

At the same time, as was shown above by the critical responses from the theological perspective, the theory of resonance can be complemented by theological reflections and can contribute to church praxes in return.⁵⁷ On the one hand, theology sheds light on the meaning of pain and suffering in front of the human realities of evil and death. It can bring about solidarity through prayers for and a pastoral approach to those who are disconnected from the source of life. By enabling rethinking about time as a creation of God, theology can drive out fear against the phenomenon of acceleration and can help human beings to live out the present and to meet God in this very moment of one's life. On the other hand, Rosa's concept of resonance provides an occasion for these theological reflections and helps one to rethink the modern-day pastoral approach for people, believers and non-believers alike. In other words, confronting this theory helps Christianity to be more open to the modern world and to understand it better. One final point to add is that, without the

⁵⁵ Schüßler, 158-162.

⁵⁶ Rosa, *Resonanz*, 306 and 312.

⁵⁷ See footnote #.30.

dimension of transcendence, one cannot apply the brakes on the pathology of modern society, especially the issue of acceleration.⁵⁸ Theology can be a great inspiration for this.

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⁵⁸ Vogt, 'Christliche Sozialethik', 33-34.

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