

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Open Access



Resonance as a medio-passive, emancipatory and transformative power: a reply to my critics

Hartmut Rosa^{1,2*}

*Correspondence:
hartmut.rosa@uni-jena.de

¹ Friedrich-Schiller-University,
Jena, Germany

² Max Weber Kolleg, Erfurt
University, Erfurt, Germany

Abstract

This is a response to a critique of my theory in the *Journal of Chinese Sociology*. In this response, I take the relationship between resonance theory and the tradition of critical theory as the starting point, and discuss the contributions of the five commentators in terms of the focus of resonance theory and its extension to critical theory, the questions and concerns that such an extension may raise, and the overcoming and reflecting on Eurocentrism in resonance theory. Finally, I will conclude with some reflections on their approach.

Introduction

Acceleration, Alienation and Resonance are “huge” concepts in the sense that they are meant to cover a vast range of phenomena from the micro- to the macro-level of social reality. Because of this, it is impossible to neatly define them and settle their meaning once and for all. Quite to the contrary, they are designed to open up debate in social theory and to produce fruitful questions and inspiration for social research. Hence, my theory of social acceleration, dynamic stabilization and resonance is not meant to conclude the debate, or discussions about the precise character of the social world we live in, but to start them. Therefore, I am very grateful to the five commentators on my work for the depth and variety of points, ideas and suggestions they have raised in their contributions to the *Journal of Chinese Sociology*.

These contributions, in my view, on the one hand illustrate the interdisciplinary and social scope of possible connections and applications for my theory, but on the other hand they forcefully demonstrate that further intellectual work needs to be done: The theory of resonance in particular is far from exhaustive completion. The main tendency I read off these contributions is a confirmation of my claim that we need to focus our studies in social and cultural analysis on the *relationships* between people and their environments—personal, material and “spiritual”. But just as much, the authors make it very clear that it is not sufficient to characterize the overall *form* of those relationships in the abstract terms of resonance theory as defined by *affection, self-efficacy, transformation* and *uncontrollability* (Rosa 2019:145–191): What is needed in addition, is further

analysis of the *quality* and *content* of relationships along all of the four dimensions. For example, what if any emancipatory potential is there in resonance with respect to social relations? How exactly can we identify the active and the passive elements in resonance? How can we specify and interpret our relationship towards artifact and objects? How do we identify alienation?

I certainly will not be able to do full justice in my reply to all the important points and arguments raised by the five interlocutors. A lot of them need further reflection and discussion and far more time and space to deal with them than what I can do in this contribution. But I will try to summarize some of their main concerns and come up with a, hopefully, more consistent and clarified account of my conception.

Since, in fact, all five commentators refer to the relationship between my own account of social theory and the tradition of critical theory, let me start with this. What I have tried to do in *Resonance* is to extend the scope of critical theory in two ways: First, resonance theory moves beyond the sphere of inter-subjective relations (i.e., beyond the sphere of recognition in the sense of Honneth and communication in Habermas' terms) by including our relationship towards objects, things or artifacts, and also towards ourselves and towards the encompassing reality or totality of the world. Secondly, whereas critical theory (as well as western Marxism and many other approaches in social and political thinking) clearly stresses the notions and concerns of agency, autonomy, reason and emancipation, resonance theory's focus extends to the "other side", i.e., to "patience" (i.e., the pathic side of relationships), relation, emotion and connection. Two of the papers explicitly deal with these extensions: Whereas Charles Taylor discusses the ethical, political, and even epistemological implications and ramifications of "patience", Tsuo-Yu Cheng comes up with a very illuminating suggestion on how to further explore and analyze our relationship with things. Hence, I would like to take a closer look at these two papers first. However, the two extensions (and the theoretical shifts involved with them) raise further questions and concerns—particularly the fear that they might come at the price of giving up the aspiration for emancipation and freedom from repression as well as the critical tool of reason, and end up in either subjective nostalgia or even reactionary conservatism. These are the concerns raised at length by Amanda Anderson and Frederic Vandenberghe, so I will seek to answer them in the second step of my reply. Finally, while resonance theory seeks to overcome ethno- or Eurocentric limits and Western biases by de-centering the subject-object distinction and reformulating the concept of agency, there certainly remains a lot of (comparative) work to be done here. Hence, I am most grateful to Paul D'Ambrosio and Geir Sigurðsson for their interesting critical comparison, or confrontation, of resonance theory with (early) Confucian thinking. I will conclude with some reflections on their approach.

Patience and our relationship with things

One trait that distinguishes the resonance approach from most contemporary positions in social theory is that it does not start with some activity, with something that *we do*—but with something that happens to us. Resonance is a specific form of relationship towards others, towards, things, towards ourselves and towards the encompassing reality variously termed "God" "nature" "the universe", "life" etc. It is defined by four characteristic elements: affection, self-efficacy, transformation and uncontrollability.

But these elements describe a movement, a dynamic encounter between the subject and “the world”. And this encounter does not start with an agency, but with “patience”, with an active receptivity, so to speak. Affection signifies the moment when we feel touched, moved, or called by something or someone “out there”. It requires a stance, or disposition of affective openness. Charles Taylor’s paper beautifully brings out this aspect and discusses its historical, moral and political implications. And quite rightly, he stresses that traditional critical theory in particular seems to have no sense for, or account of, this side of our being in the world, because it centers on the struggle for “free agency”, i.e., on autonomy and freedom from repression and unjustified domination of all sorts. It is not by accident that critical theory’s main concerns are with production/work and politics—in patriarchal modernity, these clearly are the domains of “male agency”. Yet, most interestingly, by tracing the sensibility for attentivity, receptivity and “patience” back to the Romantic era, Taylor points out how the attempt to re-balance agency and patience is intrinsically connected not just to ethical but also to epistemological questions: Giving patience an adequate place in social theory requires giving a “truth value” to emotions and to aesthetic sensibility, i.e., to our experience of beauty. But stressing the importance of receptivity and an attentive attitude towards others also explains why there is an “elective affinity” between resonance theory and (feminist) approaches towards an ethics of care (e.g., Tronto 2013). While I fully agree with Taylor on this, it is precisely these aspects which raise questions about the role of reason and the potential to inspire emancipatory movements in resonance theory—I will come back to it in a minute.

But first I want to deal with Tsuo-Yu Cheng’s paper. Like Taylor, Cheng has followed the development of resonance theory closely for a long time, and I am most grateful to both writers for their inspiring and most thoughtful comments! Cheng quite rightly stresses that my conception of resonant (and alienated) relationships with objects and artifacts, i.e. the thing-world, is not very developed and lacks elaboration. While appreciating the widening of the scope of critical theory beyond the human sphere, Cheng makes the core-point most beautifully: If a resonant relationship can be defined by the dual activity of listening and responding, he says, how is it that Rosa claims we can be in resonance with a mountain, or even a star, which clearly neither seems to listen nor to respond? And furthermore: Why does he claim that we can hardly be in resonance with a robot-cat (i.e. a robot in the shape of a cat with in-built AI technology), all the while such a robot clearly has the capacity to listen and to respond?!

In fact, it seems that we are caught between two unhelpful bad options here: Either we take resonance to be a mere psychological projection (the mountain is deaf and silent, but I project responsiveness on it)—or we have to turn hardcore realist and assume that the mountain in its “ontological reality” *really* responds. However, it appears quite obvious to me that we need to move beyond this dichotomy towards a position that assumes that “reality” is a co-construction between human subjects and something other “out there”, and hence the “truth” lies exactly in between those two options. In my view, there are a number of developments in contemporary thought from the natural sciences (e.g., Barad 2007) to anthropology (Descola 2013) and sociology (Latour 2013) which gravitate towards this conclusion, and resonance theory is just one of them. As Taylor has shown in another contribution, this idea of a co-construction beyond psychologism and realism is exactly what is at the core of Romantic thinking from Hegel to Schelling (Taylor 2018:

55–70). And if I understand him correctly, this is also the move suggested by Tsuo-Yu Cheng, but he tries to spell out what is involved in such an approach much more explicitly on the basis of a combination of two versions of New Materialism (Rosa et al. 2021). His starting point is the insight that “thing” might be too broad a category to catch all forms of relationships with objects and artifacts; and that we need a more explicit account of what is a non-reified relation to the thing world. While I fully agree with Cheng’s criticism of my shortcomings and while I am very sympathetic to the overall turn he suggests, I am not yet fully convinced of the solution, i.e., the quadrant he comes up with. His suggestion implies a number of conceptual shifts which are hardly compatible with some of resonance theory’s most basic assumptions. First of all, resonance in my understanding is a process between two (or more) separate entities. And it is a process in which those entities do not fuse or unite, but remain distinct from each other. Hence, assigning resonance only to “intra-action” and “inclusion”, as Cheng does, seems quite problematic to me. Furthermore, to call all sorts of inter-active exclusions “catastrophe” might be questionable, too: Excluding lice from human hair or the virus that causes Sars-Cov 2 from human bodies can hardly be termed “catastrophe”. Of course, we could use that term if we focus on the “perspective” of the lice or the virus, but I cannot see how we could use this criterion for our relationship towards the non-human world in a normatively interested critical theory. Cheng might argue that for human beings, eliminating lice or viruses could be interpreted as a form of “appropriation”. However, here we encounter another conceptual problem, because resonance theory insists on a distinction between two forms of appropriation: One is “inclusion” (Aneignung) in the sense of gaining control over something. This in my view leads to potential alienation indeed. The other is a “transformative appropriation” (Anverwandlung) which precisely does not mean inclusion and control, but mutual transformation. This distinction can hardly be captured in Cheng’s approach. Finally, while there clearly is a somewhat problematic ambivalence in my own conception of resonance in that it shifts between a phenomenological (first person) perspective and an “objectivist” (third person) account of the relationship, Cheng reduces it to the latter. This actually allows for “ontological clarification”, but it comes at a high price for the critical bite of the theory.

So, in the end, I am inclined to take a different route towards solving the problem of the allegedly resonant mountain and the silent robot cat. It leads to a difficult, but most interesting rethinking of the concept of agency and to an emphasis on strong evaluations. My hunch is this: I can experience a mountain as “resonant” because it appears to me as if it had a kind of “will of its own”, a certain character, an agential reality which might not be a will or an intentionality in the strict sense, but some agential power nevertheless. And it is precisely this sense which bestows the mountain with a strong evaluation from my side: I experience it as something that is valuable in itself and deserves to be preserved for its own sake. All of this clearly is not the case for the robot cat: It does not have a will or a voice of its own, for it is the product of algorithms. Thus, in interaction with it I would surely try to find out what triggers which reactions, and what kind of algorithms might be at work here, but this would not bestow the robot with strong evaluations or give it a value of its own. Yet, I have to admit that there are most difficult questions of ontology and agency involved here – perhaps it all hinges on an implicit

sense of “life” which I am incapable of spelling out at present. I will return to the question of agency when discussing the paper by D’Ambrosio and Sigurðsson below.

In any case, Cheng’s is a most interesting and original proposal which surely deserves and will provoke further reflection in the future!

Contemplating our relationship towards mountains and stars, however, might exactly be the moves that raise suspicion from thinkers such as Amanda Anderson and Frederic Vandenberghe who are worried that the concept of resonance turns all too romantic, nostalgic and metaphoric and therefore loses all its critical and emancipatory bite – or even becomes conservative, if not reactionary altogether.

Resonance as a critical and emancipatory concept

Let me start with Amanda Anderson’s very illuminating paper. In my view, she raises two important, albeit connected questions: The first is about the concept of resonance itself—and the second about its political implications or consequences. As for the concept, there are two important aspects here. First, is resonance just a subjective feeling, which therefore cannot be used to analyse and criticize systemic conditions, as Anderson supposes? In fact, the answer is a bit tricky here: Sometimes I do indeed speak about resonance as a form of experience, but perhaps this is misleading. For first and foremost, resonance is defined as a specific, objectively observable form of relationship between two entities. Thus, we can speak of resonance between two subjects (or objects), when the four criteria of affection, self-efficacy, transformation and open-endedness/uncontrollability are satisfied. Therefore, resonance is much more than just a metaphor or “good vibrations”, to quote Vandenberghe. Resonance objectively obtains when in a given relationship the four criteria are satisfied—and only then. The *experience* of resonance then is the experience of being in such a relationship. In a way, the formal structure of the concept is very similar to the concept of *alienation* in (post-) Marxist thought: Alienation is an objective condition *and* a subjective experience at the same time. This dual nature explains why the concept of resonance is not just dependent on subjective judgement or “capacious contextualism”, as Anderson (and also Vandenberghe) supposes: When I claim, for example, that a Nazi-assembly which simply hails and follows a leader does not constitute a space of resonance, but an echo-chamber, my “firm judgment” is not based simply on my political preferences, but on the observation that there might be strong affection involved, but all the other elements of resonance are missing: In an event or a group where all forms of difference are silenced or excluded, where a fixed “identity” is sought to be preserved instead of transformed and where the individual voices are supposed to fuse with the leader, the dominant form of relationship is not resonance, but echo: The setting is geared towards the affirmation of identity instead of transformation through the encounter with (uncontrollable) difference.

Now, while I agree with Anderson that we cannot simply judge other people’s experiences from the outside as either resonant or non-resonant without taking into account their subjective states, it is well possible that we might misinterpret our own experience: For example, let us assume that I have a conversation with you. Afterwards, I might be convinced: “We had such a resonant exchange!” But you might feel the exact opposite: *Rosa never really listened to me, he was just speaking and speaking, only using my arguments to take off on his own. It was the opposite of a resonant relationship, a pure form of*

alienation. Now, who is right? I think here, we might possibly be able to actually judge the situation from the outside if we recorded it: The video might reveal that I actually never really listened to you, that there was no trace of transformation as a consequence of our dialogue, that I was never affected by your arguments (and vice versa), etc. Thus, the encounter between the two of us was objectively “non-resonant”!

However, Anderson clearly misreads my position when she claims that I take relationships and experiences of resonance as a kind of “luxury experience” of the privileged and educated middle-classes. I certainly do *not* claim that “disadvantaged individuals and groups do not experience resonance, or only experience it in a diminished form”. I do not know why Anderson thinks this is my position – the opposite is the case! First, I always claimed that resonance is not a luxury form of relationship, but the most basic and primordial form of being in the world. We do not have to learn it through cultural education – we rather *unlearn* it in schools and in the competitive strive for economic, social and cultural capital! Secondly, the whole setting of my book on resonance is geared towards undermining the claim that disadvantaged individuals or groups are less capable or resonance: I came up with the figures of Anna and Hannah in the preface of the book to demonstrate exactly the point that resonance does not per se depend on our resources!

Hence, I clearly do NOT think or claim that people with mental or physical disabilities or impairments are less resonant, or experience less resonance, than others. Quite to the contrary, I think it might well be the case that, for example, people with cognitive impairments might in fact be *more* resonant than others because they might be less prone to the pure instrumentalization of others and to the strategic blocking out of others’ voices when pursuing a goal. But surely, Anderson has a good point when she asks about the non-hearing community. My very frequent use of “voices” and of “listening and answering” as the basic process of resonance unfortunately seems to suggest that I think this community might experience a constitutive lack of resonance. I really want to stress in this context that resonance as a form of relationship (and as an experience of such relationships) does not depend on voices and hearing at all—my use of voice and music in the end is just metaphorical here; it is the paradigm case for the form of relationship I have in mind, but not a necessary one! The capacity to experience resonance, in my view, does not depend on any one of our senses or capacities; rather, it seems to be a quality of all living beings.

However, if this is the case, the second question Anderson asks might all the more become troubling: How, then, can resonance provide a basis for normative critique and political action, how can it be used for emancipatory purposes? My answer to this is twofold: First of all, while we cannot “manufacture” or engineer resonance, we can analyse and criticise institutional settings for their (lacking) propensity to enable and allow for resonant relationships, for their affordance, so to speak. In late modern capitalist societies, we can discern a number of institutional “resonance-killers” such as constant time-pressure and increased social competition and ontological insecurity which undermine people’s trust and sense of self-efficacy—and hence the likelihood of resonant relationships. In my analysis, the logic of “dynamic stabilization”, i.e. the need for growth, acceleration and innovation, enforces a mode of “aggression” towards the world which

inherently excludes or hinders dispositional resonance. So clearly, we can derive a specific form of political and institutional critique from the concept of resonance.

But furthermore, secondly, from my point of view this concept directly leads to, and supports, emancipatory struggles. For forms of repression and oppression always and necessarily function to undermine people's capacity to enter into resonant relationships by undermining their experience and expectation of self-efficacy. If you do not allow believers to pray to their God, if you do not allow people to love whom they feel drawn to, if you do not allow women, for example, to find, develop and exert their own voice in the public sphere, you systematically prevent them from entering into resonant relationships of constitutive importance to them. Thus, if resonance is made the normative criterion to judge and criticize social conditions, repression and oppression of all sorts "naturally" become dominant targets—albeit not the only targets: There are other factors and conditions which systematically prevent human beings from developing resonant relationships along the social, material and existential as well as the self-axis of resonance as well.

Now this takes me to the paper by Frederic Vandenberghe. I am most grateful for his very thoughtful, insightful and sympathetic reconstruction of my work; his is clearly the most comprehensive and sophisticated account of my approach so far! It is very interesting for me to see this reconstruction revolving so closely around my allegiance to Charles Taylor, on whom I had written my early dissertation and from whom I clearly learned and profited a lot to this day. However, I feel Vandenberghe reads my accounts of resonance and acceleration too much through the lens of my first book on Taylor—without taking full account of my later developments and deviations. Thus, I definitely want to take issues with him on my alleged "lingering moral conservatism and anti-modernist nostalgia". So I want to tackle three questions: Am I an anti-modernist? Am I a moral conservative? Is resonance theory nostalgic? I am inclined to answer: no, no, and no – or at least: *not really*.

Let us start with modernity. What Vandenberghe misses is that I distinguish two sides of modernity – what I call the *process of modernization* on the one hand and the *project of modernity* on the other (Rosa 2007: 37–61). While the former is structural, systemic and institutional, the latter is moral and political. The process of modernization in my definition is equivalent to the process of social acceleration, growth and incessant innovation; i.e., it is the result of the operational mode of dynamic stabilization which defines modern society. The problem with this mode is the need to reproduce the institutional status quo through incessant escalatory speed-up and increase. We have to run faster and faster each year, to produce and consume more and more each year, to innovate incessantly just to stay in place, just to stay the same and keep track. While this was a very efficient way of developing society and the economy in the past, it leads to ecological, political and even psychic problems in the Anthropocene. So yes, I seek to overcome the logic and mode of dynamic stabilization—I am ready to give up the process of modernization. In this sense, I might actually be called an anti-modernist thinker. However, when it comes to the *project of modernity*, the essence of which I take to be the strive for individual and collective autonomy in the sense of Habermas and Taylor alike, I clearly side with modernity—albeit I think it is incomplete and somewhat truncated as long as it

centers on autonomy alone: While autonomy in the sense of freedom from oppression and repression in my view is an important precondition for the experience of self-efficacy (as the second element of a resonant relationship), it does not by itself establish the first element (affectability): It gives us a voice, but not necessarily the *ears* to enter into resonance; it might make us responsible but not necessarily “response-able” per se.

Autonomy by itself is not sufficient to enter into resonant relationships—hence, I do not want to overcome or get rid of the project of modernity, but I would like to extend and perhaps reshape it in order to create social and dispositional conditions conducive to resonance. As I have tried to show in my book on resonance, sensibility and a yearning for resonance are constitutive elements of the project of modernity, too. With this, however, as we have seen already, I do indeed shift the focus of the project of modernity and of social critique somewhat away from reason: I am aiming at a morality which is not deontologically based on rules and reason (on the power of the better argument), but on an ethical sense of “callability” (*Anrufbarkeit*), on response-ability. This means that an ethics of resonance implies an ethics of care. For being in resonance with something or someone necessarily implies perceiving them as entities which are ends in themselves, sources of value independent of our own wills and desires. Being in resonance with a person or a thing constitutively includes the aspiration to preserve their being, their “voice”. Thus, resonance implies an ethics of conservation. If we are in resonance with flowers, we will not cut and break them for a selfie. If we are in resonance with a person, we will not try to impose our will or values on them, but we will seek to allow or enable them to develop their own voice. Therefore, resonance theory implies an ethics of care which is *non-paternalistic*.

Does such a stance lead to nostalgic conservatism? I think: clearly not. It is not nostalgic, because I do not claim or think that past times were more resonant than ours. A critique of the conditions of resonance (as the form of critical theory I am aiming at) will always be possible and necessary, but it will take different forms in different societies. Thus, while most past societies were oppressive and repressive in many ways, modern societies (apart from being still repressive on many counts) need to be criticized for the mode of aggression towards nature, self and others they institutionalize. But it is not politically conservative because in no way resonance theory tries to preserve established orders or traditional values. It is not a conservatism towards institutions or structures, but a conservatism towards given, concrete manifestations of life. It is care for the living, for their innate tendencies and agencies. Thus, for example, denying immigrants a place in society is non-resonant first in denying them a voice and second in preventing the possibility of transformation through encounter with them. Denying same-sex love clearly and simply is closing a crucial axis of resonance for many people. Simply imposing a law that criminalizes abortion is denying the voices of women to be heard in a resonant way. But also: Allowing our forests and oceans to be polluted and destroyed is killing nature as a sphere of resonance. So yes, there is an ethics of conservation in resonance theory, but it certainly does not represent a conservative ethics, and even less a “political illiberalism”, which Vandenberghe thinks to spot in my work.

Conclusion: overcoming eurocentrism

As I started my contemplation of the many interesting points raised by my discussants with observations on Taylor's notion of "patiency", I now want to conclude with some reflections on Geir Sigurðsson and Paul J. D'Ambrosio's most seminal suggestions for a reframing of the conception of agency (and resonance) from a Confucian perspective. In fact, I was always hoping that the theory of resonance might open up a way to escape the confines of Eurocentric thinking, since there seem to be conceptions of resonant relationships in almost all cultures all over the world. So the two authors actually provide an account of what such an escape might look like, and I am most grateful for this!

Sigurðsson and D'Ambrosio take their starting point from the observation that from the perspective of my theory, resonance is rare and difficult to achieve, whereas from an (early) Confucian point of view, resonance is abundant and easy to bring about; it is, so to speak, the default-mode of human existence ("it is [...] important to be resonant with the world all the time, and in all sorts of ways"). Now, obviously, the question is: Do we speak of the same thing? On the one hand, we clearly do not. For as the authors explicitly state, they "think that Rosa's description betrays the very nature of resonance". Does that mean that my theory is about something else – or does it mean that we have the same thing in mind, but give totally different accounts of it? It seems to me that the truth lies in the middle between these options, but it is very illuminating to look at the difference closely. As I read their paper, Sigurðsson and D'Ambrosio think that the flaw in my conception results from the fact that I always start with two separates, closed off, independent agents who then enter into a relationship. For Confucius, they argue, the world is not an "other"; subjects are always part of the world. Resonance, so to speak, is acting *with the world*, in concert with the world, not acting towards it and experiencing it as an other. Thus, resonance is something that runs through all parts of the world – in a term reminiscent of Karen Barad (Barad 2007), the authors speak of "intra-action" rather than inter-action. Thus, they end up with a conception of "dispersed" agency which they oppose to my allegedly atomistic concept of it. Now I feel very much attracted to this, since in the last couple of years, I have consistently tried to overcome the atomist-dualist notion of agency which strictly distinguishes between an *active* subject of an action and a *passive* recipient, victim or object of it. And in fact, I have always insisted that the relationship is prior to the relata. Hence, I was trying to rethink what we can call the "Middle Voice" between active and passive, or what can be called a "medio-passive" mode (Reckwitz and Rosa 2023:141–158). Medio-passive is a way of being involved in an event which is not active and passive in turns, and not half active and half passive, but fully active and fully passive at the same time. Thus, it is just as much medio-active. In agreement with Sigurðsson and D'Ambrosio, I think that resonance shifts the center of agency from the entities involved in a relationship towards the interspace between them. For example, when there is a dance, or a jazz band playing, the dancers or players might feel that it is none of them who has the lead, or gives the impulses: The dance or the music itself is taking the lead. Similarly, in a seminal discussion, a new idea might arise right from the middle between participants: It is the discussion which produced the new idea, not so much the individual agents. Thus, the interspace (to borrow a concept of Charles Taylor) is the locus of "natality" in the sense of Hannah

Arendt (Arendt 1958). This fits very well with the concept of dispersed agency, and with the Confucian alternative to the European subject-object distinction. And I fully agree that resonance is not so much something that the subject does or seeks than something the subject *allows to happen*. Resonance is *participating* much more than *acting*. Therefore, I also agree with Sigurðsson and D'Ambrosio on the importance of rituals (which in my view create dispositional resonance on the side of the subjects involved) and on the problematic loss of them in late-modern life. Yet, stressing the point that resonance always bears the potential of *natality* also means that it implies transgressing the routinized circle between habitus and ritual. Resonance is a transformative power, not a restorative one.

However, there remain a number of significant distinctions between our conceptions of resonance which refer to deep cultural differences and indicate that we do not talk about the same thing. As I have stated above, resonance is a form of relationship and an experience of this relationship. Now, for Sigurðsson and D'Ambrosio, resonance is achieved when we “go with the flow”, so to speak; when we act in accord with social expectations we can rely on – and when we accept complete contingency by “allowing things to happen”. Predictive stability, thereby, is reached by following established rituals and traditions. Obviously, I disagree with this conception. In my view, being “in harmony with the world” and “going with the flow” are precisely *not* resonance; resonance always contains a moment of transgression, of going beyond the expected and established. And it requires difference and distinction between the entities which are in resonance; even resistance. Thus, resonance is not “harmonizing difference”, it means: temporarily bridging the gap between agents or entities that are essentially different – at the price of their transformation. But first and foremost, the Confucian form of resonance appears to require relinquishing autonomy: If resonance means to fully accept contingency, to allow things to happen and to act in accordance with expectations, we only experience self-efficacy and resonance as long as we say “yes” – the project of modernity, however, and with it my conception of resonance, insists on the possibility of a “No” *within* a resonant relationship. But this, I feel, should not be the last word on the issue: Let it be the starting point for future conversations!

Author contribution

The author has read and approved the final manuscript.

Declarations

Competing interests

The author declares no competing interests.

Accepted: 15 August 2023

Published online: 20 October 2023

References

- Arendt, Hannah. 1958. *The Human Condition*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Barad, Karen. 2007. *Meeting the Universe Halfway. Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Descola, Philippe. 2013. *Beyond Nature and Culture*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

- Latour, Bruno. 2013. *An Inquiry into Modes of Existence: An Anthropology of the Moderns*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press.
- Reckwitz, Andreas, and Hartmut Rosa. 2023. *Late Modernity in Crisis Why We Need a Theory of Society*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Rosa, Hartmut. 2007. The Universal Underneath the Multiple: Social Acceleration as a Key to Understanding Modernity. In *Modernity at the Beginning of the 21st Century*, ed. Volker H. Schmidt, 37–61. Newcastle: Cambridge Scholars Publishing.
- Rosa, Hartmut. 2019. *Resonance A Sociology of Our Relationship to the World*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Rosa, Hartmut, et al. 2021. *Critical Theory and New Materialism*. London: Routledge.
- Taylor, Charles. 2018. Resonance and the Romantic Era: A Comment on Rosa's Conception of the Good Life. In *The Good Life Beyond Growth*, ed. Hartmut Rosa and Christoph Henning, 55–70. London and New York: Routledge.
- Tronto, Joan. 2013. *Caring Democracy Markets. Equality and Justice*. New York: NYU Press.

Publisher's Note

Springer Nature remains neutral with regard to jurisdictional claims in published maps and institutional affiliations.

Submit your manuscript to a SpringerOpen[®] journal and benefit from:

- ▶ Convenient online submission
- ▶ Rigorous peer review
- ▶ Open access: articles freely available online
- ▶ High visibility within the field
- ▶ Retaining the copyright to your article

Submit your next manuscript at ▶ [springeropen.com](https://www.springeropen.com)
