

RECLAIMING THE WORLD: HARTMUT ROSA'S THEORY OF RESONANCE

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This paper takes Rosa's theory of resonance as a viable alternative to a meaningful and purposive life. The relentless pressures of modern living have led us towards a dissonant existence. Despite the scientific advances and technological innovations, the modern world has provided, life has become too burdensome. The world becomes a silent, cold, and rigid haven where our social relationships are alienated. Alienated relations separate and disconnect us from our everyday affairs, which are supposed to be essential for growth and productivity. We are cut off and unable to use our human powers to connect with the world. Alienation detaches us and our surrounding environment, and thus, it seems that no meaningful experiences can ever be achieved. Hence, in this paper, I offer Rosa's resonance as a point of looking at the world from another angle. I argue with Rosa that only when we are touched and moved by our daily affairs do we become self-efficacious and thus empowered to improve and reclaim a sense of the world. Unlike in alienated experiences, only when we are rooted, affirmed, and validated by our society can we partake and share a segment of the world. The endless social debates that we do remain to be theories unless they touch and move us from within. This is where I think Rosa's version of critical theory emerges to be relevant in our times. What really matters, he says, is what goes on in our daily affairs. In our world of social relations, we either resonate or are alienated by the things surrounding us. As Rosa argues, if we resonate, we allow ourselves to be one with the world, creating harmony and unity, which call us to respond to the call of our times.

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INTRODUCTION

Marshall Berman (1982, 5-7) explains that modern life allows us to explore the world with all sorts of artistic, cultural, social, political, and even religious activities. Modern society recognizes our capacity to create and become productive agents of our immediate surrounding environment. It promises us joy, power, adventure, growth,

and transformation and thus making the world a haven for humanity to enjoy (Berman 5-7). Hence, a sense of a better community or more attractive environment is a task that we all respond to. The world fascinates us to a certain extent where we imagine a place where we hold on to, i.e., we set for ourselves new paradigms, new sets of values, and new modes of encountering and relating with our fellows. More than this, modern society is all about growth, expansion, innovation, and increased consumption and reproduction. Rosa (2019, *Foreword*) describes modern life as an irrevocable escalation towards dynamism. We live in a world where we are continuously propelled to accelerate and innovate. Today, dynamic explorations and endless expansion of our possibilities are characteristics of appropriating the world. Rosa (2019, *Foreword*) admits that "Modern subjects, both in an everyday sense and in the long term, are increasingly oriented toward securing and augmenting one's resources, and particularly toward expanding one's horizon of possibilities." In this sense, our capacities towards self-determination rests on us alone. Rosa (2019, 39-40) continuously explains that "with respect to career, partnership, and family as well as regarding questions of residence, faith, and political orientation; in matters of education as well as in matters of fashion or taste...everyone must know for themselves what they want to make of themselves and their lives." We then function around the idea that we hold within our hands the destiny to which we truly aspire.

With the massive presence of scientific innovations and technological advancements, we can extend our reach to the world. Meyer (2006, 62-72) observes that the grasp of our own historical milieu is now more concretely productive and more enjoyable. Consequently, we progressively secure our positions and grip on our social relations just to expand our sense of the world and achieve a well-fulfilled life. Rosa (2019, 44-45) describes this eloquently when he says:

If we assume that our life chances and life's purpose are not determined a priori but rather are subject to change, then in any event, it seems sensible, even advisable, to expand our ranges and horizons of possibility. Securing rights and positions for oneself; increasing one's physical, social, and technological "share of the world" through money, knowledge, and relationships; enhancing one's skills and abilities; expanding one's networks, etc., turns out to be a – or, rather, the – proper life strategy under conditions of ethical uncertainty... [expanding one's life through competition, money, and technology know-how implies that] "devoting one's energies to accumulating resources becomes nothing less than a categorical imperative if one hopes to have even a chance of leading a self-determined life.

In conjunction with technological expansions, we are made to believe that by faster movements, standardized actions, measurable outcomes, and relentless competition, we can gain better resources to bring the world within our reach. And thus, happiness and a good sense of life.¹ We want to run as fast as we can and compete as much as we can because we believe that by toeing the moral imperative of the world, we make ourselves more *available, accessible, and attainable*. By abiding by the demands of

our surroundings, we enrich our means and broaden our capacities to master our surrounding environment. As Rosa (2020, 3) emphasizes this by illustrating:

Take, for example, the lure of technology: with the help of a bike – this I learned as a child – I increased the horizon of my world to the end of the village or town and beyond. When we turn 18 and get a car, the horizon of availability and accessibility increases again: we can go to the discos and cinemas in the big city some hundred kilometers away from where we live, and so on. The airplane then brings other continents within reach. The same goes for the smartphone: with this tool, I have all of my friends and all the information I need from all parts of the world in my pocket. Or take the lure of money: money is the magic wand with which we make the world available, accessible, and attainable. In fact, our wealth indicates the scope or reach of our horizon of the available, accessible, and attainable.

In *The Uncontrollability of the World* (2020, 10-14), he again expounds, explaining that:

It appears to us [the world] as something to be known, exploited, attained, appropriated, mastered, and controlled. And often, this is not just about bringing things— segments of the world within reach, but about making them faster, easier, cheaper, more efficient, less resistant, more reliably controllable... Hence there must be a second-positive, attractive-force in play, one that we can identify as the promise of expanding our share of the world. The tremendously powerful idea that the key to a good life, a better life, lies in expanding our share of the world has arisen as a cultural correlate to the structural logic of dynamic stabilization in modernity's understanding of itself, working its way deep into the tiniest pores of our psychological and emotional life. Our life will be better if we manage to bring more world within our reach: this is the mantra of modern life, unspoken but relentlessly reiterated and reified in our actions and behavior.

With money, consumption, and commodification as character orientations, we try to innovate and accelerate faster since we fear that we might lose something along the social competition. In his interview with Rosa, Schiermer (2020, 3) opines that it becomes a social necessity that if we do not toe these imperatives, we are afraid that we might fail to achieve a sense of good life. We become apprehensive if we do not dance to the tune of economic dominance. Hence, we tend to conform and subject our lives to the charisma of the modern world. Thereupon, the internal logic of competition serves as the framework of how to consummate a good life.

However, Rosa (2020, 3) laments that the more we want to control our surroundings through incessant technological innovations, the more the world becomes mute, dull, and unresponsive. The world turns into a disenchanting, aggressive, and hostile situation. He (2019, 634) further claims that "these imperatives enforce the

dominance of reifying, mute relationships to the world both in the institutional constitution of modern societies and in the mode of relation to which actors in such societies are disposed of." The aloofness and hostility of the world can be seen in the exacerbated and never-ending struggles we undertake in our daily state of affairs. Parental and marital conflicts, our social and individual duties and obligations, the work overloads we need to address, and the seemingly unabated inflation we need to accept – all of these make us doubt whether modern life is worth living at all. We are distraught by the presence of duties and responsibilities brought about by powerful demands coming from an anonymous source. Yet despite all these distressing relations, we still depend on and commit ourselves to technological means, hoping to reconnect, resonate, and feel that we belong and are rooted in our community.² We are made to believe that through technological channels, we amplify our reach, ease our burdens, and improve our chances of achieving a good life. Accordingly, we ran faster and produced more goods at an expeditiously greater rate. In this sense, we are driven towards never-ending flows of production and consumption, which imply a continuous mobilization of life. And to maintain this dynamism, the material, social, political, cultural, and technological wheels must move progressively, i.e., faster and faster at a greater speed. We observe these in the drastic successions of things, events, or people around us. Speed is the name of the game. It is a strategy for survival. In today's discourses, speed becomes the survival of the fastest. Rosa (2018, 27) says an *"increase of some sort – quite regularly through economic growth, technological acceleration, and higher rates of cultural innovation.* Thus, our dependency on technology and the allurement of technological know-how, Rosa (2018, 103) hopes "that we can find the right place for us, that we meet the people we really want to live with, the job that satisfies us, the religion or worldview which is truly ours, the books that talk to us and the music that speaks to us, etc. Thus, ultimately, we aspire to arrive at a form of life that turns the world into a living, breathing, speaking, responsive, 'enchanted' world." Nevertheless, he (2019, 596) warns that:

...this escalatory dynamic makes itself felt in the fact that, regardless of how successfully we live, work, and busy ourselves this year, individually and collectively, next year we will have to be a little faster, more efficient, more innovative, better, if we want to maintain our place in the world – and the year after that, the bar will be set a little bit higher still. In fact, success, strength, and efficiency in the present are directly proportional to the strength of the compulsion to escalate in the future"... The efforts we make today do not translate into lasting relief tomorrow, but only create greater difficulties and exacerbate the problem.

Consequently, this incessant innovation and acceleration weigh on us, too much pressure which leads to anxiety and alienation from ourselves and the world.³ Spatscheck (2015, 263) notices that with the stress and anxiety that modern living gives us, we can no longer experience ourselves since we are perplexed and disconnected from what we really aspire most in life. The rapidity of social change desynchronizes the paces of our lives and thus cuts us off from existentially relating with the world. Earlier in this century, Fromm (1955, 117-121) would already warn

that the pathological structures of modern society make us even more perplexed and thus alienated from true ourselves. Because of this modern condition, Bauman (2021, 3-5) adds that we have become disillusioned by our positions in the social sphere. Apparently, Rosa (2020, 19) also discloses that

...[the] theory is that this institutionally enforced program, this cultural promise of making the world controllable, not only does not "work" but in fact, becomes distorted into its exact opposite. The scientifically, technologically, economically, and politically controllable world mysteriously seems to elude us or to close itself off from us. It withdraws from us, becoming mute and unreadable.

Again, he asserts in *Resonance* (2019, *Foreword*),

An aimless, endless compulsion toward escalation ultimately leads to ***problematic, even dysfunctional or pathological, relationships*** with the world on the part of both subjects and society as a whole. This dysfunction can be observed in the three great crises of the present day: the environmental crisis, the crisis of democracy, and the psychological crisis (as manifested, for example, in ever-growing rates of burnout.

Nonetheless, we need to underscore though that we could no longer decelerate, much less negate, the process of a hyper-techno economy. It moves at a greater rate which we could not have imagined or expected. The time pressure of running faster and producing more goods for our satisfaction stays in line with the rapid changes brought about by the system. The intensity of the capital and the limitless seduction of the digital world is here for us to stay. James (2007, 30), in his discussion of Virilo's speed, seems to imply that the dynamic nature of modern life will replicate even further at a greater speed in the future. We need to accept that no matter how we rationally criticize modern ideals, the more it intends to relentlessly reproduce to an epic degree. Nonetheless, it is interesting to note too that resistance to this dynamic structuralization of life is understandable. While many of us become very cautious in choosing what form of technological advancement could really lead to human flourishing, there can be many potential drawbacks to resisting technology. It can lead to socioeconomic exclusion. Education and employment, for instance, depend on digital literacy and access to technology. Once we become stagnant, we may be less competitive in a globally evolving landscape. Nevertheless, with the relentless demands of modern life, how then can we still make sense of our lives? How, then, can we still reclaim a particular segment of the world? Are there *other* alternative modes of living? It is at this point that I want to propose Rosa's concept of resonance.

RESONANCE: ALIENATION'S *OTHER*

As being-in-the-world,⁴ Rosa's theory begins by emphasizing the quality of our *relations* with the world. Experiential encounters, he says, "precede both the

experiencing, acting subject and the formed and formable object it encounters, and that it is in this encounter, in their meeting each other, that the relationship between them is in each case stabilized and reinforced." Both the subject and the world are already given. They are *there*. So, in their ontic '*thereness*,' both are already involved and wrapped up in a particular alliance or dialectical exchanges so that how we are related might either enthrall and fascinate us or alienate and disconnect us from the world. In *Sociology of Relationship* (2019, 23), Rosa explains:

...life is a matter of the quality of one's relationship to the world, i.e., the ways in which one experiences and positions oneself with respect to the world, the quality of one's appropriation of the world... The relational quality of our relationship to the world is thus always established by the fact that we desire something (subject pole) that appears attractive to us (world pole) or fear something (subject pole) that appears repulsive to us (world pole), and each determination of attraction or repulsion, in turn, forms the contours of both subject and world... Because the ways in which subjects experience and appropriate the world are never simply individually defined, but rather are always socioeconomically and socio-culturally mediated, I call the project that I have undertaken in this book a sociology of our relationship to the world.

Elucidating further, Rosa (2019, 184) continues,

Relationships with the world are always dynamic, constituted by and through a process of evolving encounters between subject and world. Any analysis of relating to the world is therefore incomplete, indeed flawed, if it fails to take into account the dynamic character of such relationships. The world approaches the experiencing subject, just as the subject (acting and discovering) enters into the world. Relations to the world can thus be differentiated according to where (within a given experience of the world) the primary movement comes from.

Thus, our daily experiences with and in the world, no matter how trivial and minute they may be, speak of our joys, desires, struggles, and fears from which we progressively respond or inactively recedes. Our reactions include bodily and reflexive as well as cognitive and emotional aspects that are inextricably intertwined. Hence, Rosa (2019, 166) now clarifies that the quality of relationships we have with the world addresses us in some way, and this "address" is either positive or negative in its significance." Our dispositions towards the world allow us to earnestly engage ourselves or to disdain objects or events that seem undesirable for our well-being. And it is precisely this disposition, or this affiliation, that leads us to alienated dreadful feelings or ecstatic fascinating meetings with the outside world. In *A Good Life Beyond Growth* (2018, 107), Rosa would comment and say that:

Alienation, I want to claim, is a particular mode of relating to the world of things, of people, and of one's self in which there is no responsiveness, i.e., no meaningful inner connection. It is...a relationship without (true) relation...*Alienation's other* is a mode of relating to the world in which the subject feels touched, moved, or addressed by the people, places, objects, etc., he or she encounters.

In *alienation*,⁵ Rosa (2018, 6) lamentably remarks that there is a feeling of uncertainty, fragmentation, and internal division between us as subject creators and the world we supposedly call *home*. The disconnection pushes us to a disgruntled disposition where both the world and the self cannot speak. In this sense, says Peters (2016, 3), our own subjective context is silenced to the extent that there is no bond or connection between us and our immediate locus of existence. Consequently, what we do and why we do things are no longer the results of our passionate human desires but rather products of unconscious demands for survival. Unconsciously, we must act and find gratification in our actions in accordance with the required external demands of modern living (Fromm 1955, 77-78). In other words, life would be redirected towards a reified conformism and consumerism, i.e., we are obliged with *how* we do things and no longer know *why* we do these things (Fromm 1999, 2). We just do things routinely or mechanically in accordance with the demands of our duties and obligations in life. More than this, Rosa (2018, 98) explains that we do things, no matter how routinary they are, because of the promises they provide – the promise of a better life. Hence, Banerji (1978, 41) would also claim that a routinary alienated life restrains us to the point that we become helpless and hostile to the world, others, and ourselves. This results in tremendous anxiety because we are cut off, and unable to use our human powers to connect with the world (Fromm 1957, 7). Thus, alienation, as a particular mode of experiencing the world, is described by Rosa as the *relation of relationlessness [Beziehung der Beziehungslosigkeit]* because the world does not mean anything to us anymore (Susen 2019, 318). However, despite all these, we cannot discount too that there are instances along the contours of life when we experience harmonious relations with the world. In this instance, we are connected and feel a sense of belongingness. There is an inner vibration between us and the world. In such an encounter, the world speaks and communicates to us enthusiastically.

This mode of experiencing the world is what Rosa calls *resonance*, which is the flip side of alienated life. Without the disgusting feeling of alienated self, we cannot conceive the possibility of resonant experiences. Hence, Rosa describes it as the *otherness* of alienation. Through resonating with the world, we become fascinated and enthralled so that we can hear and feel that, indeed, we are one with the world. Take, for instance, nature. Hans (2017, 39-52) elaborates and describes it as follows: The scents we smell, the colors of the meadows, the shadows of the trees, the aura of open fertile landscape, all of these captivate us and give us a sense of connectedness. Because of these simple yet enthralling experiences with nature, we suddenly hear the world speaks. It fascinates us. We become excited as we partake in that movement, an inner movement that calls us to respond to have a meaningful encounter (Rosa 2018, 142). In this sense, we are moved, touched, and resonate. This vibrant feeling is a

particular form of relationship that provides a sense of a good life. Drawing from Noonan's sociological interpretation of modernity (2003, 5), we surmise that resonance is a non-alienated mode of relation that speaks of our capacities as self-determining agents who take control of a world where we can foster meaningful relationships. Through resonant encounters, our relation to the world is no longer characterized by separation or disconnection but rather a union, i.e., harmonious relations where we vibrate to the extent that both are moved, touched, or gripped. There is a sense of affinity or congruence between both poles in existential relations. Accordingly, oscillating energetic effects arise for that matter. Rosa (2018, 111) explains:

...subjects individually and collectively experience resonance typically along particular 'axes' of resonance. Thus, for some, music provides such an axis: Whenever they go to the concert hall, or to the opera, or the festival arena, they have a good chance of making that experience. For others, it will be the museum, the library, or the church, the forest or the shoreline. More than that, we also foster social relationships that provide something like a reliable axis of resonance: we can expect moments of resonance when we are with our lovers, with our kids or with our friends – even though we all know that very often, our respective encounters remain indifferent or even repulsive.

Therefore, as we are touched and moved or gripped by our experiential relations, a feeling of oneness, belongingness, or rootedness dominates us. We are gripped, says Rosa (2019, 28), "not only by other people but also by plants and mountains, by music and stories, by challenges." He points out that in such a 'state-of-affairs,' we are "taken" by that experience, and it captivates us from within. Thus, a sense of harmony or oneness overwhelms us. These resonant feelings happen instantaneously, like when we are taken aback, overjoyed, or mesmerized by the beauty of a Japanese Zen Garden; the wonder while observing dew drop on a leaf; the fascination while watching the sun sets along the bay; the engrossing message when reading a book, the euphoric excitement in listening to music; the joy of experiencing being loved and loving in return, or just being alone, sitting and reflecting away from the hurly-burly setting of urban life. We could say then that resonant relations with the world are characterized by spontaneity, i.e., we can never expect what is going to happen. It is 'on-the-spot' affection where we are touched, mesmerized, gripped, or moved by someone or something that calls us to respond (Rosa 2019, 645).⁶

Nonetheless, it is important to mention that this response is a result of the efficacious character of being touched and moved by that 'moment' in our experiential relationship. He explains this in *The Global Dialogue* (2018, 1-2):

Resonance, then, is the capacity to be moved, touched by the other and at the same time the ability to respond to the call...this dual movement of af<-fection (something touches us from the outside) and e->motion (we answer by giving a response and thus by establishing a connection) thus always and inevitably has a bodily basis. But the response we give,

of course, has a psychological, social, and cognitive side to it too; it is based on the experience that we can reach out and answer the call, that we can establish a connection through our own inner or outer reaction. It is by this reaction that the process of appropriation is brought about...

Since we are 'united' or 'rooted' existentially with the *other*, there is a feeling of oneness, of harmony, which leads to a sense of self-efficacy, i.e., the empowerment to respond. The feeling of connectedness, belongingness, or rootedness allows us to be at home and thus validates us to pursue our passionate desires. Hence, when we resonate, we are at home with ourselves, and the efficacious moment grants us the power to be who we are. This character trait moves us to respond and act because we know that we are already at *home*. This feeling of being comfortable and at ease at *home*, legitimizes our position to do something to reach out, enact or act in certain ways to improve our spatiotemporal condition. Hence, resonating with the *other* establishes a connection through our own inner or outer reaction (Rosa 2018, 108). It is by this reaction that the process of appropriation is brought about. It is a feeling of self-efficacy where we know we can reach out and make ourselves available and reachable to the call. It is in this sense, says Rosa (2020, 108), that "self and world [are] related in an appropriative way: the encounter transforms both sides, the subject and the world experienced." This is what a good life means – empowerment to express, be creative, productive, and do things within our reach. It is the opposite of alienation, where we imagine, act, or produce in accordance with the external command.

Rosa's resonance theory is a glimpse of what could probably a good life means. Amidst the pressures from a highly technological yet fragmented environment, Rosa proposes what a good life looks like. Since the never-ending escalation leads us to a dysfunctional relationship (alienation), he then introduces the flipside, which is resonance. Just as we yearn for a good life and re-energize ourselves from disconnected social relations, resonant experience allows us to envision what this good life is all about. Drawing from Fromm's appropriation of human needs (Fromm 1955, 76), resonance invokes in us a sense of freedom, connectedness, belongingness, and rootedness, which, as mentioned earlier, direct us into a harmonious relationship with the world, and thus a sense of a good life. This condition 'fine-tunes' our instincts and eventually calls us to respond. In this sense, Wood (2021, 2) agrees that resonance is something normative since it becomes a yardstick on how we could achieve a life where co-optation becomes a social orientation. In addition, Kociatkiewicz (2020, 4) affirms too that this co-optation 'humanizes' us as co-owners or co-creators of the world. After all, the nature of our encounters with our surrounding environment could either destroy us or inspire us to re-evaluate our socio-structural arrangements that could hopefully build a better tomorrow. Rosa (2019, *Foreword*) expounds that:

...life is a matter of the quality of one's relationship to the world, i.e., the ways in which one experiences and positions oneself with respect to the world, the quality of one's appropriation of the world. Because the ways in which subjects experience and appropriate the world are never simply individually defined, but rather are always socioeconomically and socio-

culturally mediated, I call the project that I have undertaken in this book a sociology of our relationship to the world.

Hence, this is where I contend Rosa's version of critical theory rests. Rosa is aware of the material and economic inequalities brought about by modern living. Likewise, he is also cognizant of the effects of a desynchronized social relationship. Our paces of life do not conform to the rapidity of the technological speed of modern living (Rosa and Scheuerman, 2009, *Introduction*). There is a constant tension between how we live our lives and the demands of running faster and raising the bar higher, so he explains, "The efforts we make today do not translate into lasting relief tomorrow, but only create greater difficulties and exacerbate the problem" (Rosa 2019, 596). While it is true that resonance might be the alternative to alienated and disconnected forms of social relations, Rosa offers it as the springboard toward social liberation. In his book *Resonance*, his primal concern stems from the fact that we, as social beings, are, first and foremost, relational animals. In an interview with Correa (2021), Rosa emphasizes the fact that from the very beginning of human life, we have always wanted to be in touch, moved, and be related to others and the world. This *relatedness* is ontologically given, i.e., it serves as the normative ground for finding meaning in our daily endeavors. The familial duties and obligations we need to cater to; the food that we eat; the bills we need to pay; the demands of our jobs that we need to fulfill; the social events we need to attend; the meetings we need to respond to; the religious commitments we engage – all of these are manifestations of the status of how we relate with the world. Our bodily expressions, such as eating, drinking, walking, gazing, narrating, receiving, giving, etc., are indications of our involvement or ontological relationship with the world. So, what happens in our daily activities – lived experiences – where we subjectively encounter objects around us is a matter of our *relational* engrossment. This is the reason why Rosa acknowledges that life is a matter of the quality of how we are related – either we are enthralled or fascinated, or we are alienated and thus disconnected. Our concrete and real participation in these daily activities in life is too important since it is where the locus of meaningful experience arises. Our lived experiences, or experiential relations, are where we share our myths, beliefs, traditions, and religion, including our own idiosyncrasies. Hence, *relatedness* in the world is the platform for us to form purposeful connections.

What Rosa wants to imply is that the modern world, with all its scientific and technological, and capitalist-laden innovations, remains as it is. We cannot decelerate it, much less negate it totally. We are intently immersed in the modern world, which is progressively revolutionizing itself dynamically. Our social, political, economic, cultural, and religious participation are intertwined within these processual movements of modern life. In other words, we intently partake ourselves, involving our life and limbs in the system. That is why our endless debates and criticisms of capitalist-laden and technologically-driven modern living seem to fail. The condescending message we try to deliver is too abstract for ordinary people to comprehend. Our discursive criticisms are highly technical, and they cannot *relate* to the lived, subjective experiences of the masses. Further, they do not offer a viable alternative to achieve meaningful endeavors. For instance, as we analyze and criticize capitalist-driven

modern society, what different form of living is feasible? How could we achieve this? Where can we find this? The 1st generation of critical theory, says Rosa (2019, 8), assessed the pathological social structures and is "convinced that different modes of existence are social possibilities," and he continues, "their greatest fear was that we might lose this sense of the true possibility of a different form of life and a better world; that we might become 'one-dimensional' men and women." However, what is this other mode of living? Where can we find this? How could we achieve this amidst rapid changes in the modern world? We could not reject nor negate the givenness of the world. It is, and we are immersed in it. We continuously struggle within it. Certainly, we could acknowledge the intellectual contributions of these critical theorists. Still, it seems that they have forgotten that critique must also include the actual, real, and concrete lived experiences, i.e., we find ourselves existentially engaged, embedded, immersed physically, emotionally, psychologically, and spiritually in *this* world, and there is no other world beyond except the one we are *related* with. Hence, what critical theory must do is ponder on this form of existential relatedness and reflect on those emotionally laden experiences that we have. It is not to negate or reject what is already given but to ruminate whether existing social structures can lead us toward resonant experiences. It is not an outright refusal of the capitalist system, but to ponder what current social, economic, political, cultural, or even religious networks can animate us and give us a sense of meaningful and purposeful life. That despite the rapidity of social changes that we experience, critical theory must address how the constellation of life events could bring us resonant experiences. As mentioned, we could not decelerate, much less totally reject capitalism vis-à-vis the highly technological world, no matter how demanding it might be. Since our primordial givenness unto the world is a matter of relational concern, critical theory must start anew by reflecting on the condition of this relationship. In an interview with Schiermer (2020, 6-7), Rosa expounds and emphasizes:

I really think that critical social theory currently is in a very ambivalent position. On the one hand, there clearly is a strong social need for a thorough analysis and critique of modern society: for an approach that is capable of integrating political, psychological, philosophical, and sociological perspectives into a powerful critique of what has gone wrong in our world. You can see it from the unrest and desire among the students at our universities, on the streets, or even in high school: their interest in Marx and Adorno and the like is clearly increasing; they are looking for inspiration. But our professional, academic versions of critical theory have two flaws, I believe. One is that, all too often, authors do not address the daily experiences of social actors at all. Too much of the discussion is purely meta-theoretical. You find book after book after book about the conditions of the 'possibility of critique', of the merits and pitfalls of 'immanent' versus 'transcendent', or of 'local' versus 'universal' critique, etcetera. These debates never come to a convincing end. They have become increasingly sterile and, in the end, irrelevant. And it does not get much better if debates shift back to very abstract discussions about, say,

the self-validation of capital. What we need, I believe, are approaches that flesh out the theory in accordance with what really goes on in our social lives and our societies here and now; and which address our actual experiences.

It is very easy, says Rosa, to be critical and cynical about our situation. We publish all our critiques and analyses in magazines or reputable journals. But who reads, much less understands them? Only academically skilled persons will, but these are highly abstract and incomprehensible for the dispossessed and the unlearned because our criticisms do not touch the very core, i.e., the affectual or emotional content of relationships. We find in our books the possibilities of immanent or transcendent, local, and universal appraisals, yet they do not tell us something about how we should be related to objects of immediate concern (Schiermer 2020, 7). Our critique does not say something about how we should go on with our lived experiential encounters with the world. It does not provide what ought to be done – *how relationships must be* - in order to achieve a meaningful and purposeful existence. As a matter of fact, it is *how* we are related that gives us hope to pursue and live life for the better. Our daily narratives provide us spaces to compare and determine for ourselves what disconnects us and what resonates with us. From there, we could establish what our society offers and what it lacks. Critical theory must start from these valuations of our experiential relations with the world. It must examine which sequences of events obstruct resonant relations. It needs to determine which among the social constellations of modern living allow us to achieve good and resonant communal affairs. If our encounters with the world do not enhance our horizons, then we need to express our sentiments regarding these pathological social structures. On the other hand, if our daily endeavors allow us to grow and achieve our potential in life, then we must conform to these current social institutions. If, for instance, our jobs do not make us more humane, then we need to criticize those structural arrangements that impede resonant growth. After all, our relationship with the world speaks of only one goal, which is happiness, i.e., to become creative and productive in our daily endeavors. Hence social debates must rest on what touches and moves us, which are affectual and relational experiences with the world (Rosa 2021, 2). As Zalec (2021, 2-3) would comment that in resonance, we anticipate a world that speaks to us, listens to us, and accommodates us. Thus, "faced with this ambitious task, it becomes necessary to make a case for a modified and renewed form of critical theory. Rosa (2019, 8) says:

The other problem is that many adherents of critical theory believe that critique should be purely negative: that it is most valuable if it totally rejects the reality given. Again, I think this is wrong. It is very easy to be critical and cynical and desperate about the current state of social affairs. A vital critical theory needs to do more than this. From Marx to Benjamin, Adorno and Horkheimer, and from Fromm to Marcuse, critical theorists have been convinced that a different mode of existence, another way of being in the world, is a social possibility. Their greatest fear was that we might lose this sense of the true possibility of a different form of life and

a better world; that we might become 'one-dimensional' men and women. But in order to keep this sense of true and fundamental change alive, we must at least try to spell out what this better world could look like. Even though they were extremely skeptical, we find some hints in the works of the just mentioned protagonists of early critical theory: Benjamin's concept of aura, Adorno's conception of mimesis, Marcuse's conception of eros, or Fromm's idea of love serve precisely the function of a placeholder for this different mode of being.

It is in these resonant-oscillating movements, I maintain, that our potential arises toward social liberation. The resultant efficacious character authorizes us to determine, analyze, and act on the pathological structures that hinder growth and development. Efficacy leads to spontaneity, and thus by becoming spontaneous, we become active agents for social transformation.⁷ With the release of repressive energy, we achieve a sense of vitality (Firestone 1986, 30). The key element is *self-efficacy* that arises out of our transactional-mutual relations. A resonant world shares the same feelings of mutual understanding. This sameness breeds reciprocity that leads to actions and production, thus creating a better environment, and hence, a good life. After all, Rosa (2019, 637) asserts that resonance is a *quality* of life that we share with the world.

We are always in search of a good life. In fact, technological productions and accelerations speak of our capacities and desires to be connected, i.e., to be rooted and to belong to a particular group or community where we relate our values and dreams. However, the character orientation of the market industry serves as the 'emotional matrix' where our dreams, and aspirations are all cemented to follow and adhere to its pattern as a matter of survival (Funk 1998, 2). And Rosa (2019, 637) admonishes us too:

For inasmuch as the economically and politically, scientifically, and technologically, legally and bureaucratically institutionalized forms of our relationship to the world are all based on a mode of dynamic stabilization, they enforce corresponding dispositions and orientations on the part of subjects...overcoming the logic of escalation is inconceivable without fundamental institutional reforms. This is particularly true with respect to the economy. So long as economic activity exclusively follows the escalatory logic expressed in the formula $M-C-M'$, moving solely with a view to gains, profits, or returns, i.e., so long as the accumulation of capital remains the true subject of modernity's economic relationship to the world, the imperatives of escalation will remain in effect.

He continues:

...a more resonant form of modernity's institutionalized relationship to the world cannot be realized unless we tame, or rather replace, the "blind" machinery of capitalist exploitation with economically democratic institutions capable of tying decisions about the form, means, and goals of production back to the criteria of a successful life.

However, the different axes of resonance discussed by Rosa (2018, 112) could spark a *movement* to respond to the call of the other. Since each of us interprets and acts in our own specific environment, the same is the locus of alliances. Haugaard (2020, 2) comments that alliances serve as our own 'ring of reference'. It is through this 'ring of reference' (concrete circumstances) that brings forth a sense of meaning. It is the language game we play within our own interpretative horizon. It is seen as the *experiential* effect so that we come to view a particular segment of the world in a different light (McDonnell et al, 2017, 3). It is also in this sense, as explained by Muhlhoff (2014, 3), that we synchronize in timing, rhythm, and intensity of affective displays. Hence, when we resonate, we are empowered to voice out our sentiments regarding our social predicaments. After all, resonant relations are "formed only of small oases, tiny islands in the vast ocean of escalation." However, Rosa is quick to note that "Where resonance does emerge, it has the potential to exceed itself. Such initiatives are not futile, for they at least keep alive the notion of and desire for a different way of relating to the world, and they can potentially provide an important basis of experience for the cultural constitution of a post-growth society."

The power to transcend individual resonant experiences is conceivable if members of a particular group or community start to resonate existentially. What I mean by this is when members of a group or of a community share the same joys, pains, struggles, and commitments in life, then their power can exceed a specific level that the possibility of social transformation begins. In this sense, collective alliances grow. When we resonate, we feel the same predicaments. We share the same values. When existential commonalities resonate among us, we feel that we belong to the same group and share the same story (Levine and Kerr, 2007). As Koyenikan (2016) also observes that "there is an immense power when a group of people with similar interests gets together to work towards the goal". The sense of *sharing the same woes and resonating with their own predicaments* ignites people's sense of belongingness. Thus, Bandura (1998, 2-3) explains that "[we] too possess the capabilities to master comparable activities required to succeed... The stronger the perceived self-efficacy, the higher the goal challenges [we] people set for themselves and the firmer is [our] commitment to them." For Rosa (2018, 108), this group efficacy is "experienced when [people] realize that [they] are capable of actually reaching out to and affecting others, that they truly listen and connect to us and answer in turn. We could say then that resonance requires us to direct ourselves intentionally and 'libidinally' so that we can actively participate in the reconstruction of the world (2019, 235). It is not about the reward or outcome of what this in-group has in mind, but it is about setting the message straight to the world, i.e., "we want to be heard!" For Rosa (2019, 238), group efficacy is first and foremost the group's presence is felt by creating an impact on the world. Thus, he continuously explains:

How much can human beings accomplish in the world – or against the world, as the case may be? To what extent are subjects capable of shaping their position in the world along with their path in life through the world, and to what extent do they simply have to accept what the world (or fate) determines for them?

When we resonate, we feel a sense of oneness and rootedness in our environment, and, thus, a particular authorship of who we are. The empowerment we have commits us to change the things that disconnect us and embrace those which unite us. Such is the essence of resonant experiences, which lead to our goal for a better world.

CONCLUSION

All of us want to reclaim our share of the world. The fact that we are *beings-in-the-world* speaks of our concrete experiential encounters where our passions, dreams, and human aspirations would hopefully be fulfilled. Rosa describes it eloquently that all these technological innovations and social transformations we make imply our earnest desire to resonate with the world. However, its ugly consequence resulted in the alienation of our lives. The rapidity of social change and the intensity of technological advances push us all to be vulnerable. In our eagerness to achieve a good life, we fabricate everything just to dance to the tune of economic management. We compete through our productive activities; we run as fast as we can to outrace the other and tend to rationalize life through cost and benefit analysis. In the end, we are drained and alienated. As Frosh (1991, 6-7) notices, life now has become a locus of spilling and thrilling, pushing us to slip away leaving only an empty space.

As we find ourselves helpless and seemingly hopeless as gigantic anonymous forces invade our inner sanctum, we yearn for ways where we can truly express our lives. This is manifested in our eagerness to reconnect with others and with the world. By resonating, we become who we are, and we realize our potencies, our powers, and our capabilities towards improving our lot. Once the vibrating chord strikes us, self-efficacy arises. We act, enact, or respond to a particular call toward social liberation. We believe that there is much that we can do to change our situation. Resonant encounter generates and activates the hope to envision goals and plan courses of action that impacts our future.

Rosa's theory of resonance portrays what a non-alienated relationship would look like. His theory becomes the yardstick where we could start reconstructing our socio-political lives. It serves as the barometer for reacting and criticizing the impact of hyper-capitalist constructs. It is through resonant relations that opens the door of gradually streamlining our socio-political, and economic horizons. How we are touched, moved, and gripped by the events, and how these would turn towards efficacious moments grant us the immanent desire to be involved as active subject-creators of our communities. After all, as Rosa would claim, we are, first and foremost, resonant beings.

Movements around the world are resonant relations. Specifically, members of a group or a community, like the LGBT+, are touched and gripped by circumstances that surround them. They are stirred to plan and act, eventually changing the course of their lives. Hence, it is only through resonant relation, I maintain, that we could also be inspired to envision, plan, and act for a better, just, and equitable society.

NOTES

1. Rosa explains that we believe that having a good life is one in which we can freely choose among the varieties of goods and services that the world may offer, and in doing so, we become self-determining individuals whose existence is based on authentic goals, abilities, desires, and needs. See Alexis Gros (2019, 21).

2. Some of the technological advances like the internet and social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and LinkedIn, and in addition, the power of video conferencing like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Google Meet; the instant messaging and chat applications that we now use like Messenger, WhatsApp, Telegram, and Slack; the online marketplaces we search for goods and services like Amazon, eBay, and Etsy; further we have online learning platforms like Coursera and Khan Academy; and most likely, we constantly rely on YouTube and Spotify for entertainment purposes.

3. Rosa explains in one of his interviews that the tempo of our everyday state of affairs is no longer aligned with the speed of social innovations and technological consumption. Since technology and scientific innovations have their own cadence, the beat that they demand from us is so fast that we need to run as fast as we can to catch up with the timing and changing of its course. In this sense, the human tempo is not synchronized with the technological one. As a result, we feel "out of tune," and no matter how we try our very best to beat up the demands of modern life, we fail because technology innovates faster and faster, leaving us behind. See Spatschecka (2015).

4. Rosa uses this Heideggerian phrase to emphasize the historical embeddedness of the acting subject, i.e., we as determining agents of our historicity. He says that we find ourselves always embedded in or enveloped by and related to a world. In other words, the situation where we find ourselves is the *only* world which we are related with. There is no other world beyond but the present one, where we encounter objects around us. See Rosa (2019, 59).

5. Alienation from a Marxist point of view is the automatization of human labor. Here the workers, through their own labor, are being misled in their relationship with the capitalists. Through the worker's subordination, he becomes at the mercy of the capitalist. The more capital is invested, the more labor is extracted from the worker. Consequently, the more he must sacrifice his time, freedom, and work as a slave. Interpreting Marx's notion of alienation, Fromm (2004, 39) says, "Labor is alienated because the work has ceased to be a part of the worker's nature and consequently, he does not fulfill himself in his work but denies himself, has a feeling of misery rather than well-being, and does not develop freely his mental and physical energies but is physically exhausted and mentally debased. The worker, therefore, feels himself at home only during his leisure time, whereas at work, he feels homeless." On the other hand, Rosa's use of alienation is the same as Marx's. However, it must be noted that alienation here has a psychological interpretation, an element that is lacking in Marx's and which Rosa tries to reinterpret, drawing from the analysis of the 1st generation of the Frankfurt School. See Rosa (2019).

6. Rosa also claims that even if we plan it, we cannot expect the quality of relationships that might arise from our plans. Let us take, for example, meeting old

friends whom we have not seen for two years. What might happen may not be what we expected. That is why when we resonate with the world, the feeling of being gripped by the moment is never planned. It happens instantaneously.

7. Albert Bandura, a well-known psychologist, explains that once an individual achieves self-efficacy, he is empowered to enact in his immediate environment. However, there are things that he cannot change; thus, he needs a proxy agency. He tries to get other people whose expertise, power, or influence to act on his behalf in order to get the desired outcome of his will. See Bandura (1998).

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