

The Listening Society and Its Enemies

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The predominant modern way of being and acting in the world can be defined as a mode of deafness and muteness – and of aggression: It is based on the operational logic of dynamic stabilization, which structurally requires incessant growth, acceleration and innovation in order to reproduce the institutional status quo. In this way, modern sensibilities are geared towards control and availability - with the obvious problems of political, ecological and psychological desynchronization. Against this, the lecture will seek to develop a different mode of being in the world, which can be called a resonant mode. Resonance takes its cue actually from music - its core elements are listening and responding. Hence, resonance does not start with something we do, but with something we perceive, or allow to happen. Here, responsibility is literally turned into respons-a-bility. It implies a medio-passive (and medio-active) way of relating to the world. One specific site to develop, practice and experience such forms of mediopassivity and respons-a-bility can be found in theological theories, rituals and practices. However, there can be no doubt that religious authorities and dogmas can easily play out the other way and become resonance killers of the worst sort. Thus, the challenge is to work out and define the dividing lines in this Janus Face of Religion, and to explore the ways in which democracy requires dispositions and institutions of respons-a-bility.