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Christian Faith, Contingencies, and Resonance

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ABSTRACT

How are experiences shaping how people understand, relate to, and see Christian faith and doctrine as relevant in their lives? It can be argued that this is due to how such doctrines can relate to and interpret their experiences of contingency and resonance. This approach entails elements that can help understand the quest for experiences with religion within a larger theoretical framework and point to some of the implications that can be derived from a theoretical approach that addresses a specific understanding of Christian—and especially Lutheran—theology. A main idea here is that the contemporary discussion about the uncontrollable features of reality corresponds to and supports the notion of the human being as being referred to something other than its own agency.

1 | Introduction

Currently, both ordinary parishioners and professional theologians are exhibiting a shift toward experience in their communities and practices. For the ordinary church member, this means that doctrine recedes into the background but without losing its relevance altogether. For professional theologians—and the present author is among them—it is possible to observe an increased interest in empirical studies among theology students and within the guild of theologians themselves.

Not every experience appears relevant in the same manner, though. I will argue that the experiences that really matter, and for which there is a quest among congregations and individuals, are those that in some way or another create a sense of transformation or growth that makes them develop a feeling that they are part of something larger than themselves, and over which they do not have full control.

In this article, I will present elements that can help understand the quest for such experiences within a larger theoretical framework and point to some of the implications that can be

derived from these with regard to the understanding of Christian, and especially Lutheran, theology. A main idea here is that the contemporary discussion about the uncontrollable features of reality corresponds to and supports the notion of the human being as being referred to something other than its own agency. Recognizing this is a condition for living well in the world and developing a trust in God that can make them rely on something other than their actions or work. The concept of resonance points to a subject that is not confined to itself, and this might be one of the points where central elements of Christian faith correspond with, support, or even contribute to the understanding of experiences that people may have, irrespective of their religious commitments.

The experiences that Christian faith mediates or contributes to processing are of different kinds. In the so-called Scandinavian Creation theology, ordinary experiences of trust, compassion, openness, and care are emphasized. In the following, I will argue that such experiences are closely linked to features such as contingency and resonance—experiences that manifest what is outside human control but nevertheless have a positive influence on human life.

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2 | The Experience of Contingency and Its Impact on Religion: Hermann Lübbe

Perhaps nothing challenges the experience humans have of being in control more than the experiences of contingency, which appear sudden and unexpected and is not the result of effort or calculation. Among these are not only the negative experiences of illness and accidents, but also positive experiences of glad tidings, a sudden recovery, or mystical experiences. All of these belong to the world in which we find ourselves.¹

In a contribution not often observed in the English-speaking world, sociologist Hermann Lübbe has developed an understanding of religion's contribution after the Enlightenment that highlights the role of contingencies and their role within the framework of religion.² In the following, I will highlight a few of his insights and see them as a backdrop to contributions that have been given more attention recently.

Lübbe sees the consequences of the Enlightenment expressed in the prejudice that religion restricts the full realization of what humans can be, and that science is all that is needed to fulfill this aim.³ However, he claims that the actual reality of human life is more adequately expressed in a religious conception than in the scientific and Enlightenment approaches to reality: The latter do not relate sufficiently to life as it is actually experienced, and ignore or misrepresent the specific cultural mode of relating to reality that religion opens to.⁴ A main feature of this relationship of religion to reality is the experience of that which is conceived culturally as the uncontrollable or unavailable (*Unverfügbar*).⁵ A primary reason for this is that such experiences do not originate from human will.

Accordingly, Lübbe sees religion post the Enlightenment as related to contingencies. It has to do with experiences of contingencies and how to deal with these. Hence, religious practices aim to handle or come to terms with contingencies, and it is these practices that generate significance and meaning beyond the instrumental approaches of science and the instrumental approaches to reality. We are talking here about those elements in reality on which we depend and from which we cannot liberate ourselves, but which nevertheless are outside our control. These are those to which religion attributes significance.⁶ These are experienced in the non-necessary existence of the world and ourselves, as this has also been articulated in metaphysics.⁷ Lübbe summarizes this by pointing out that who we are—our identity—is based entirely on things that are beyond our control, without us being able to fully dissolve into them. Much of what we have become is not the result of our will, and that which is, such as, for example, changing denomination or choosing a profession. Still, these choices, according to him, are all minor points, and even such planning of life trajectories changes nothing about the unavailability of central elements of life, which are presupposed rather than clarified in such planning. He continues:

The fact, transcending any sense of planning, that we exist and not rather do not exist, implies—within indeterminable boundaries—the fact of being as we are and not otherwise. Within these same essentially indeterminable boundaries, our identity, as we tend to

bring it to presence through the telling of our own story, is an absolutely contingent entity—one that cannot be transformed in terms of meaning produced by action.⁸

It is against this backdrop that Lübbe then develops his thesis about religion as a means of coming to terms with contingency (*Kontingenzbewältigung*). The notion “coming to terms with” entails that religion represents a relationship with reality that is neither technical, political, or moral. It is not an individually mediated attitude toward reality, but rather one that is mediated culturally by shared memories.⁹ Its main result is that we learn to recognize the contingency of our lives as something we nevertheless depend on.¹⁰

Religious acknowledgment of the uncontrollable (*Unverfügbarkeit*) of existential contingency is not, *ipso facto*, an acceptance of that which, in truth, we would much prefer to be entirely otherwise. It does not negate the joy of existence. It does not unmask the radiance of the world as a mere projection of satiated subjects, nor does it denounce every form of agreement with oneself (*Einverständnis mit sich selbst*) as the result of a self-deception in need of destruction. On the other hand, the inevitability of having, time and again, to resign oneself to the experienced limits of one's own possibilities is indeed one of the elements of unavailability that calls for acknowledgment. In fact, it can be said that, in many respects, under the conditions of modern civilization, boundary experiences that compel resignation are becoming increasingly acute.¹¹

So far, the presentation of Lübbe's insights. What we can draw from these is not only that religion deals with another attitude and relationship with reality than science, morality, and instrumental manipulation. These latter modes of existence concentrate on the human subject as a self-enclosed entity set apart from the world it relates to. However, a religious attitude is about recognizing and affirming that our existence is contingent and depends on elements we cannot control or manipulate. Hence, it is not only about accepting the finite limits of our lives, but also about accepting that reality is something we must recognize as outside the scope of our agency. As Lübbe points out, this is not a restriction of our lives, but what religious faith teaches us to come to terms with to live a better life—a life not dependent only on what we can accomplish. Hence, religion still might play a role in people's lives, because this is a precondition for living better, and for trusting a reality that God has given and which we did not constitute ourselves.

A major point behind these considerations is that coming to terms with such contingency does not mean controlling or overcoming such experiences because that is impossible. It is more about finding a way to live with them and based on them, thereby also allowing them to influence how we develop a fundamental attitude toward life. And this is the point where the topic of resonance enters.

3 | The Relevance of Resonance for Understanding Conditions of Experience

We can further develop Lübbe's insights by examining the work of contemporary German sociologist Hartmut Rosa.¹² He is concerned with different ways of relating to the world to overcome alienating elements. In other words, he might be interpreted as providing the means for understanding what creates a distorted relationship with reality and overcoming these.

Rosa finds the alternative to alienation in the chance to experience the world in a way that creates resonance. The media for providing such experiences are nature, art, and religion. Engaging in these spheres offers us a mode in which we have a more intensified relationship with the world. He can be seen as contributing to and expanding Lübbe's understanding of why we need to accept contingency when claiming 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."¹³ Hence, our attitude toward the world conditions how we experience it, and then it becomes important to see it as more than a mere object.

Rosa points to a basic "*feeling for the world*, which necessarily precedes their consciously formulated and articulated beliefs."¹⁴ He underscores that the extent to which cognitive and cosmological/theological variations in how humans relate to the world may differ, and that these differences may be both the cause or the result of emotional or existential differences in how these groups are "situated" in the world. Hence, "on the one hand, it is reasonable to assume that one's belief (whether in a benevolent God or the law of karma or a Darwinist universe) can fundamentally influence and shape how one experiences and appropriates world, on the other hand there are equally good reasons to suppose that the emotional foundation of our relationship to the world, which remains inaccessible to us, is itself responsible for what beliefs appear reasonable to us."¹⁵

The claim in this quote suggests that humans experience the world in ways determined by a reciprocal relationship: our experiences, in general, can be both the cause and result of what we consider adequate ways of understanding the world. However, the most crucial point here is that Rosa identifies the fundamental relationship we have with the world—and thereby also our experiences of it, in what I suggest calling *pre-subjective* conditions: That is, conditions that are prior to how we come to experience ourselves as *subjects with a substantive sense of self* in the world. Accordingly, I would argue that experiencing oneself as a subject in this latter sense results from emotionally charged relationships that color and shape both self-perception and world perception. Moreover, at least some experiences with religion, of experiences that we later on frame within a more cognitively based religious worldview, are rooted in such *pre-subjective* experiences—not least mystical experiences of being one with all, but also experiences where we lack language, understanding, or the ability to cope with what befalls us.

Experiencing the world as in resonance with oneself has to do with a fundamental experience of participation: it builds on a fundamental feeling of connection with different spheres of life,

and the experience that it is possible to attain or affect something in each of these spheres. A person who relates to the world in this way can therefore feel

that she herself can also be affected, can be touched. She allows herself to be touched, moved, gripped, not only by other people, but also by plants and mountains, by music and stories, by challenges. The development of intrinsic interests and self-efficacy beliefs, moreover, correlates with the experience of social recognition, and herein lies an obvious bridge to our resonance-based approach. Without love, respect, and esteem, our wires to the world – our axes of resonance – remain rigid and mute.¹⁶

The social conditioning of experiencing being in resonance with the world should not be lost to us: love, respect, and esteem emerge from positive relationships with other human beings. Hence, emotional relationships with others foster our ability to be in resonance with the world and experience it in a way that makes us feel deeply connected with it. Thus, it gains significance. Rosa also speaks of being "geared more toward creative receptivity, successful interactions, adapting the world to himself rather than mastering it."¹⁷ Previously, I used the term "participation" to describe this fundamental mode of being in the world, and we can now qualify this notion further by speaking about a positive experience of participation that is grounded in pre-subjective elements and relationships, which in turn *lead to a specific understanding of the world's character*. This experience of the world's character is also what Lübbe points to with his concept of experiences of contingency.

For Rosa, the alternative to the participatory mode of being in the world is understanding one's relation with it in terms of an antagonistic confrontation. Here, the relationship is understood in terms of a tension between the subject and the object. Then, "the images of the objective world appear as 'symbols for points of aggression'; action appears as domination, and reality per se as 'resistance.'"¹⁸ Accordingly, the relationship with the world is conditioned by seeing it as individual segments "marked by an attitude of determination, domination, transformation, and conquest" and oriented toward expanding one's knowledge and grasp, options, and range of action.¹⁹

At this point, we arrive at insights that add to what we have already identified as crucial for identifying something as a religious experience: the ability to identify something as a religious experience depends on language and interpretive practices. We have also seen that *what counts as such an experience may vary and that the conditions under which they appear may be related to different practices*. Rosa adds further nuances in this picture when he argues that

one's relationship to the world cannot be defined simply according to the fields in which one operates or the kinds of activities in which one engages, but rather can be determined only via analysis of one's attitude toward and experience of the world. Whether or not a given subject manages to develop and maintain

constitutive axes of resonance depends, first, on his or her (physical, biographical, emotional, psychological, and social) disposition; second, on the institutional, cultural, contextual, and physical configuration of the segments of world in which he or she operates; and, third, on the relationship between these two factors. Even those segments of the world that tend to be hostile to life, like deserts, snowscapes, and filling stations, can under certain conditions become genuine oases of resonance. Alienation, in the sense of a mute, cold, rigid, or failed relationship to the world, is, then, the result of a damaged subjectivity, social and object configurations that are hostile to resonance, or an imbalance or lack of compatibility in the relation between a given subject and some segment of world.²⁰

Again, we can here easily detect how Rosa expands and deepens Lübbe's more generic insights and helps us understand what an experience is when it is defined as religious: He radicalizes the idea of our relationship with the world by not assuming "that subjects encounter a preformed world, but instead posits that both sides—subject and world—are first formed, shaped, and in fact constituted in and through their mutual relatedness. What and how a subject is can only be defined against the backdrop of a world in which it is placed and to which it finds itself related; in this sense, one's relation to oneself cannot be separated from one's relation to the world."²¹

Rosa's analysis underscores that subjects do not "stand opposite the world, but rather find themselves always already in a world with which they are interconnected and interwoven, with respect to which they have either fluid or fixed boundaries depending on the historical and cultural context, which they fear or love, into which they feel thrown or in which they feel sustained, etc."²² Thus, the socially conditioned way of perceiving the world entails that "not only are subjects' attitudes toward, outlooks on, and relatedness to the world individually and culturally variable, but what constitutes or is knowable as world is also co-variable."²³

Rosa can thus identify "two entirely different relationships to the world, each of which gives expression to different types of self and world that are related to each other in different ways."²⁴

First, subjects are those entities that have experiences or, taking into account that experiences are always constituted intersubjectively, to which experiences manifest themselves. Second, subjects are the site at which motivated psychic energies materialize, i.e., at which the impulse to act becomes operative. This, moreover, makes it clear that subjects [...], are always related to "their" world intentionally; in other words, we are dealing here with not only a cognitive, but also an evaluative and existential relationship. Subjects are thus entities that encounter world and that respond to the world intentionally.²⁵

Because the world is prior to all our work and activity, Rosa emphasizes that "The precedence and ineluctability of a world to which subjectivity always already finds itself related is first and foremost corporeal."²⁶ By pointing out this fact, he identifies an element that is hardly at the forefront of these other scholars. The body is a significant resonance condition, and accordingly, for experiencing the world as religiously charged. Hence,

it is through the effect of gravity on our body, the working of our senses, and the tactility of our skin that a palpable world first emerges, and with it every form of consciousness as consciousness and perception of the presence of something not only to which the experiencing subject finds itself related, but which is constitutive of experience and thus of the subject itself. If we accept this notion of a fundamental relatedness that precedes the division of subject and object and serves as the very basis both of the presence of world and of subjective experience, then resonance appears not as something that first develops between a self-conscious subject and a "premade" world, but as the event through which both commence.²⁷

Accordingly, because our relationship with the world is primarily established existentially and corporeally, "the world, as the always already present other side of said relationship, necessarily concerns us in some way as subjects, [and] has significance for us."²⁸

Rosa's sociological perspective makes it possible for him to argue that "social conditions—the institutions, practices, modes of organization, temporal structures, power structures, etc.—form, shape, and otherwise influence not only the cognitive or conceptual, but all aspects of human beings' relationship to the world, including and especially their corporeal, existential, intentional, and evaluative aspects."²⁹ Given that he finds, from a normative perspective, that humans need to develop relationships and sensitivities to resonance, he holds that it is necessary to investigate the conditions for resonance and critique approaches that make such relationships difficult or impede them. Only then can alienation be overcome. This critique also implies a critical examination of the conditions for religion and religious experience.

Experiences shaped by and manifesting resonance are not based only on what he calls horizontal and diagonal relationships. Rosa acknowledges responsive relationships "to the world, existence, or life as a whole that can be said to constitute the vertical dimension of resonance."³⁰ These relationships are of considerable significance in terms of the experiences that religion mediates, providing contexts of origin, identification, and justification/validation. In these, the subject's counterpart is "perceived and experienced as a totality that exceeds the individual. In experiences of vertical resonance, the world itself in a way obtains its own voice."³¹

The metaphor Rosa uses here allows him to say that what happens in a world that has lost "metaphysical axes of resonance in the

sense of a cosmological or theological resonant order”³² is that the world has lost its voice. The loss appeared after “the emergence of instrumental, rationalistic, and disengaged relationships to the world,” which means that “our cultural relationship to the world threatens to fall mute.”³³ However, it does not entail that modernity lacks spheres of resonance in which subjects can assure themselves of a responsive relationship with the world. Such spheres continue to exist, and among them are also modern forms of religiosity and spirituality.³⁴

To articulate what religiosity and spirituality mean in a contemporary context, Rosa takes his point of departure Charles Taylor’s concept of “strong evaluations.” These strong evaluations are not identical with our physically or empirically given desires but independent of them; they serve our perception of what we find important or meaningful as such and that to which we ascribe worth: “Strong evaluations form the basis for evaluating our own desires and decisions and thus give our lives meaning and direction.”³⁵ Thus, they define the contours of our cognitive map of the world, and imply a strong and fundamental evaluative component. By linking Taylor’s notion of strong evaluations to his own resonance theory, Rosa points to how it is

particularly significant that from the perspective of subjective perception, strong evaluations do not proceed from subjects themselves, but rather from segments of world that concern them in some way. As these evaluations refer to something that appears important as such, the source of said value is always located in the world. Something appeals to us or makes demands on us, and this “something” can take on highly different forms depending on our underlying cognitive map or the prevailing cultural interpretation of the self. It can be God (or a god) or history, reason, class, or even nature or art. In every case, however, it functions as a “constitutive good,” as it defines our value-directed relationship to the world.³⁶

The fundamental notion of this quote for the present argument is “constitutive goods.” Such constitutive goods configure human relationships with the world. This point entails that all humans have “at least implicit ideas about what (ultimately) matters, what life is all about.” However, given the overall argument in Rosa, this notion and the sense of what is important “evolves first through social practices and interactions, being fixed and explicitly articulated only later.”³⁷ Against this backdrop, religious practices and the experiences they mediate might challenge and change the subject’s understanding of and relationship with the world, because they take us out of the ordinary and immediate: The point made here becomes apparent if we consider “that resonant experiences may only be possible where strong evaluations are involved, as they (along with the constitutive goods behind them) first give form to segments of world that are capable of ‘speaking with their own voice,’ that can respond or appeal to us (or contradict us) [...]”³⁸

When we reflect on this, it is evident that people shaped by strong evaluations, as mediated or expressed in Christian faith, will have to respond by asking how their experiences are “speaking to us” in

ways that manifest resonance. Rosa’s understanding of resonance thus allows us to understand the first-person perspective that resonance experiences in religious contexts imply. He summarizes, using idiosyncratic figures:

Resonance is a kind of relationship to the world, formed through af←fect and e→motion, intrinsic interest, and perceived self-efficacy, in which subject and world are mutually affected and transformed. Resonance is not an echo, but a responsive relationship, requiring that both sides speak with their own voice. This is only possible where strong evaluations are affected. Resonance implies an aspect of constitutive inaccessibility. Resonant relationships require that both subject and world be sufficiently “closed” or self-consistent so as to each speak in their own voice, while also remaining open enough to be affected or reached by each other.³⁹

In the following quote, I add to the notion of resonance *religious* in brackets to display how what Rosa writes makes sense when we try to articulate the impact of religious experience on how we relate to the world. In resonant relationships,

Self and world can continuously change and yet remain in resonance, and what is more, it is precisely through [religious] resonant experiences and relationships that self and world are mutually adaptively transformed; responsive relationships exist not between entities that are identical (that would correspond to a mute echo relationship) but between entities that are different yet respond to each other. We can further recognize a longing for [religious] resonance as the fundamental motivation behind the pursuit of identity and authenticity driven by the human desire to be specifically addressed, to be met with a constitutive, expressive response or affirmation.⁴⁰

Hence, for Rosa, “In this way, religious experience can be redefined as an adaptively transformative relationship to the world in which the correlating experience of self-efficacy is achieved not through external action, but through internal movements of taking in, synthesizing, and apprehending.” Thereby, he seems to end at a position that bears similarities with Schleiermacher’s.⁴¹ However, his main intention is to demonstrate that “an essential aspect of religious experience and religion’s appeal lies in the idea of an accommodating, responsive world that touches us, and that we are capable of meeting in turn, is eminently compatible with the Western religious tradition”⁴² and its emphasis on how relation and interdependence is the fundamental for human life.

The above suggests two main points for the overall argument: Christian faith—and religion in general—is not leaving the world behind, but is another, and more engaged, way of experiencing the world than we can find if we only engage with the world instrumentally. Simultaneously, religious faith is among the phenomena in human life that can help us overcome some of the

alienation experienced in the modern world, as it enables us to engage in it in ways that create meaning. This is contrary to the claims of critics of religion like Nietzsche, Freud, and Marx who all claim that religion contributes to alienation, in some way or another.

4 | The Self That Experiences Resonance: The Porous Self

We can develop the ideas presented so far about experiences of contingency and resonance by incorporating one additional contemporary philosophical perspective. This, we find in Charles Taylor's distinction of different types of being a self. Focusing on the self here is important because it enables us to understand how a religiously shaped self differs from a self that relies solely on its own agency for its relationship with the world. The religious self can, I argue, be seen as corresponding with what he calls the porous self.

Taylor establishes a distinction between “buffered” and “porous” selves, viewing the former as a result of the development of modernity. In contrast to this buffered self that is confident in its own powers and capabilities for moral ordering of the world, Taylor sees the porous self as participating in an “enchanted world” in which there are forces other than humans. These influenced human lives: “the enchanted world was one in which these forces could cross a porous boundary and shape our lives, psychic and physical. One of the big differences between us and them is that we live with a much firmer sense of the boundary between self and other. We are ‘buffered’ selves.” For these modern selves, there exists no meaning in reality that does not come from ourselves. We are the meaning-making species. However, for a porous self, “meanings are not only in minds, but can reside in things, or in various kinds of extra-human but intra-cosmic subjects.”⁴³

Of course, experiences in general can impose meaning on us. Taylor points to how this happens all the time today, also in experiences that we might call contingent: “certain responses are involuntarily triggered in us by what happens in our world. Misfortunes befall us, and we are sad; great events befall and we rejoice.”⁴⁴ However, we experience these events as “outside” of our minds. “They may change our view of the world, or be stirred up in ways that we otherwise wouldn’t be.” Moreover, “Since we are ourselves as bodies continuous with these external things, and in constant exchange with them, and since our mental condition is responsive causally to our bodily condition in a host of ways (something we are aware of without espousing any particular theory of what exactly causes what), our strength, moods, motivations, etc. can be affected, and are continually being affected, by what happens outside.”⁴⁵ This allows us to see the meaning they entail as a function of how our minds operate. In contrast, for a porous self, the meaning is not originating from the mind but is already there in what is experienced,

quite independently of us; it would be there even if we didn’t exist. And this means that the object/agent can communicate this meaning to us, impose it on us, in a third way, by bringing us as it were into its field of force,

It can in this way even impose quite alien meanings on us, ones that we would not normally have, given our nature; as well as, in positive cases, strengthening our endogenous good responses. In other words, the world doesn’t just affect us by presenting us with certain states of affairs, which we react to from our of our own nature, or by bringing about some chemical-organic condition in us... [I]n the enchanted world, the meaning exists already outside of us, prior to contact; it can take us over, we can fall into its field of force. It comes on to us from the outside.⁴⁶

Although Taylor makes his description based on an interpretation of the shift from medieval times to modernity, it is reasonable to say that how he describes the two modes of experiencing the world corresponds to how a subject that relates to and affirms contingency and resonance is distinct from a subject that sees themselves as the only originator of meaning in the world. Correspondingly, a buffered self has lost a certain sensibility which Taylor sees as an impoverishment. What Rosa identified as the conditions of resonance is further described by Taylor, who writes that the buffered, modern self “makes a sharp distinction between inner and outer, what is in the ‘mind’ and what is out there in the world.” The distinctions at work are those between mind and world, and even mind and body. Consequently, “Whatever has to do with thought, purpose, human meanings, has to be in the mind, rather than in the world.” On the other hand, the “boundary between mind and world is porous, as we see in the way that charged objects can influence us.” By making a distinction between influences and causal powers, Taylor also opens up to seeing that being a buffered self, which aims at causal control and eliminates contingencies, is different from being a porous self that allows the world to shape its experiences of resonance. Or, to put it theologically: A porous self is open to the transformative grace of God as it is mediated through its experiences of what takes place in God’s creation.

5 | Conclusion: Christian Faith—Affirming Contingencies and Recognizing Resonance

It should be apparent from the above analyses of sociologists and philosophers that Christian faith is a specific way of relating to the world that we share with all human beings. To have faith is to trust in other forces than those we have at our own disposal. It is about accepting and rejoicing in the fact that we are dependent on and can rely on elements beyond those we control, and it means rejoicing in some of the experiences of resonance that we can have if we are open to things happening that we have not caused.

This does not mean that all relevant experiences are contingent or resonance shaped in the way presented above: ordinary experiences of being marginalized, ill, or subject to accidents are contingent experiences that one should try to overcome. They might nevertheless be causing reactions that manifest resonance in care, compassion, rage against injustice, or other responses that testify to how we are interconnected with the world that God has created.

Perhaps the experience of contingencies and resonance can also offer new chances for understanding what Christian faith entails in a world that we now characterize as the Anthropocene. In this era, the human footprint has a profound impact on all of creation. But the above analysis might also help to convey what kind of experiences are essential to focus on in the communication of the Christian message: it is not about morality or control (which both take their point of departure in human agency) but in being open to the influences and experiences that God offers us through participation in the creation we are called to safeguard, protect, and hand over to coming generations.

Endnotes

- ¹For the presence of mystical experiences, see the recent and very sober presentation in Allison(2022), and Henriksen(2024). For a more extensive list of different experiences of contingency, see Lübbe(1986, 151).
- ²The following is based on Lübbe's German book, and all translations are mine. See Lübbe (1986).
- ³Lübbe (1986, 145).
- ⁴Lübbe (1986, 148).
- ⁵Lübbe (1986, 149). The German word "Unverfügbar" has no direct correspondence in English, but points to that which is outside of human reach or manipulation. This should be kept in mind when I translate it with the "Uncontrollable." Lübbe credits the philosopher Friedrich Kambartel for having developed the notion in relation to Religion. As will be evident below, this is also a central element in Hartmut Rosa's theory about resonance.
- ⁶Lübbe (1986, 154).
- ⁷Lübbe (1986, 156).
- ⁸Lübbe (1986, 159). My translation.
- ⁹Lübbe (1986, 161ff).
- ¹⁰In German: "Was soll da „Bewältigung“ heißen? Die Antwort lautet: Bewältigte Kontingenz ist anerkannte Kontingenz." Lübbe (1986, 166).
- ¹¹Lübbe (1986, 169). My translation.
- ¹²This section about Rosa is to a large extent a reworking of material from Henriksen (2024, 161ff).
- ¹³Rosa (2019, 5).
- ¹⁴Rosa (2019, 12). My italics. He supplies a lengthy quote by William James to back up this claim: "Religion, whatever it is, is a man's total reaction upon life [...]. Total reactions are different from casual reactions, and total attitudes are different from usual or professional attitudes. To get at them you must go behind the foreground of existence and reach down to that curious sense of the whole residual cosmos as an everlasting presence, intimate or alien, terrible or amusing, lovable or odious, which in some degree everyone possesses. This sense of the world's presence, appealing as it does to our peculiar individual temperament, makes us either strenuous or careless, devout or blasphemous, gloomy or exultant, about life at large; and our reaction, involuntary and inarticulate and often half unconscious as it is, is the completest of all our answers to the question, 'What is the character of this universe in which we dwell'?" (James, 1917, 35).
- ¹⁵Rosa (2019, 12).
- ¹⁶Rosa (2019, 9).

- ¹⁷Rosa (2019, 13).
- ¹⁸Rosa (2019), Marcuse(1969).
- ¹⁹Rosa (2019, 13). Cf. for an example of this separative attitude the analysis in Dahill (2009).
- ²⁰Rosa (2019, 15–16).
- ²¹Rosa (2019, 32).
- ²²Rosa (2019, 33).
- ²³Rosa (2019).
- ²⁴Rosa (2019, 34).
- ²⁵Rosa (2019).
- ²⁶Rosa (2019, 35).
- ²⁷Rosa (2019).
- ²⁸Rosa (2019, 36).
- ²⁹Rosa (2019, 37).
- ³⁰Rosa (2019, 40).
- ³¹Rosa (2019).
- ³²Rosa (2019).
- ³³Rosa (2019).
- ³⁴Rosa (2019).
- ³⁵Rosa (2019, 133).
- ³⁶Rosa (2019, 134).
- ³⁷Rosa (2019).
- ³⁸Rosa (2019).
- ³⁹Rosa (2019, 174).
- ⁴⁰Rosa (2019, 182–183).
- ⁴¹Rosa (2019, 259).
- ⁴²Rosa (2019, 260).
- ⁴³Taylor (1999, 33).
- ⁴⁴Taylor (1999).
- ⁴⁵Taylor (1999).
- ⁴⁶Taylor (1999).

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