

Flusseriana
Hörigkeit/ "Submissiveness"
Annie Goh

Only in German does "Hörigkeit" allow for a wordplay between "hören" (listening) and "hörigkeit" (submissiveness or devotedness) and "gehörchen" (to obey). In Flusser, the term appears with a political dimension, apparently arising out of Flusser's dissatisfaction with the visual metaphor of "political views"* , to instead propose an auditive metaphor of political "Hörigkeit" (Angenommen 1989: 77).

"Hörigkeit" sees Flusser examine the notion of freedom, the perceptual modes of seeing and hearing and their relationship to political engagement between private and public. He refers to the German word for voice "Stimme", also carrying the meaning of a political vote and "abstimmen" to come to a consensus. As he states, "audition, much more than vision, is political"** (Hoerapparate: 2, Angenommen: 77). He construes the commonplace assumption that bad hearing compensates with better vision or vice versa as erroneous. Instead, he asserts that vision and audition mutually reinforce one another. In "the gesture of listening to music", he draws the similarity between Mary's immaculate conception and in hearing a voice, "receiving" the word and obeying (gehörchen) (Gesten 1991: 193-194).

Via an analysis of his hearing aid "Hoerapparat", Flusser describes the relevance of sensory perception within this technical apparatus between function and malfunction. A hearing aid is proposed as an instrument of freedom, affording both an enhanced sense of hearing, as well as its off mode or malfunction allowing one to enjoy the luxury of silence. Concurrently, he disputes a simple analogy to eyelids (Angenommen: 78). He argues for the normally functioning ear also to be considered a hearing apparatus, the sounds of the outside world being "programmed noise". Flusser emphasizes the programmed nature of all "natural" and "cultural" apparatuses and warns against the covert submissiveness inherent in them (Hoerapparate: 3-6).

Flusser, V., "Gesten" Düsseldorf: Bollmann Verlag (1991)

Flusser, V., "Angenommen" Göttingen: Immatrix Publications (1989)

Flusser, V., "Hoerapparate" date unknown, Vilém Flusser Archive Best.1608-Nr.2444

- *"politische Ansichten"