

Nikita Dhawan

Impossible Speech

On the Politics of Silence and Violence

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The work seeks to bring together critical perspectives on the complex relationship between speech, silence and violence. The task set up here is twofold: On the one hand is the attempt to philosophise silence, to explore the various philosophical engagements with questions that range from the limits of language to the challenge of the ineffable. To this end the notion and working of silence in many of its diverse aspects is analysed within canonical philosophical texts.

On the other hand, there is also an endeavour to politicise silence, namely, to explore how some forms of speech have been made impossible within various philosophical discourses and the violent consequences thereof. Thus the work seeks to provide an intersection of the philosophy and politics of silence from a transcultural perspective. Juxtaposing silence with power irritates our everyday understanding of speech as emancipation and silence as censorship.

Some questions addressed in the work are: When is speech politically enabling and when does it become repressive? Can silence be subversive? And when is silence a performance of power and violence? If discursive violence is inevitable, why not give preference to silence over discourse? And lastly why one should not avoid speaking?

West-östliche Denkwege

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