

# Speech-Thinking, Zeitdenken and Personalism

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I will try to synthesize my research on the points of convergence and divergence between Speech Thinking, (ST), Zeitdenken<sup>1</sup> and the personalist traditions (in a strict and wide sense, the first meaning those who consider themselves personalists and the latter meaning authors that come close to personalist thinking).

In the first part I present in the way of theses, some key points that I assume are central assumptions of ST, the way it can be found in ERH's writings (see Bibliography for references and abbreviations); it is a personal reading (may be some of you will consider I forgot something important).

In Part II we'll see how the three main currents of relational personalism<sup>2</sup> which developed in the first third of the last century relate to this topics. These three currents are, by chronological order,

- the Russian (the philosophical and religious debate about the spiritual crisis of the Western civilization and the need of a new thinking related to a new religious renaissance began in Russia around the revolution of 1905 and the simultaneous foundation of a Religious-philosophical society and specially since 1909 with the publication of an anthology, *Vehi* (Landmarks), written by members of the society, like Berdyaev, Bulgakov, Gershenson and Frank), these authors and developments show some parallels to the great dialogical thinker of the Russian world, Mikhail Bakhtin who worked out an ethics of answerability, and a philosophy of dialogue, first in unpublished manuscripts (a *Philosophy of the Act* recently published) and later in his book on Dostoevsky (1929)

- German (beginning with Schelers seminal work ( It is worth remembering that the first two seminal works in the theory of the person are published by Scheller in 1913: *Über Sympatiegefuhle* and *Formalismus in der Ethik*, vol I), 1913 the same year of the famous *Leipziger Gespräch*, the night conversation between Rosenstock and Rosenzweig were the first one presented to his new friend his idea of Revelation as orientation, closely akin to the personalists was Jaspers who had presented his habilitation in 1913 *Allgemeine Psychopathologie* and was since 1914 teaching in Heidelberg, in 1919 his *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen* is one of the first publications in the crossroads between personalism and existentialism (see later on that).

- and French Personalism, starting with the foundation of *Esprit* in 1931, E. Mounier, D. de Rougemont, A.Marc, Lacroix, and others.

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<sup>1</sup> I don't like translating Zeitdenken as simply time-thinking because it is not about a thinking in time or about time, but as you know is about the three kinds of temporalities and modes of being related to them.

<sup>2</sup> It is often distinguished in Europe between substantial and relational personalism, a convention to avoid the confusions caused by the way Maritain and other catholic authors see themselves also as personalists but in a substantialist way, coming back from Boethius.

-there are also moves toward personalism in Spain in this period ( Unamuno and Ortega can be considered close to some of the issues) but real personalist thinking began in Spain, later on, with Xabier Zubiri (1898-1983) and Maria Zambrano (1904- both disciples of Ortega. Zubiri stop teaching at the university during Franco's dictatorship and Zambrano went into exile. Pedro Lain Entralgo (1908-2001) and already later Carlos Diaz (born in 1944) as well as some authors close, or belonging to the Spanish Church like Father J.Coll and Fr B. Pedemonte (Zubiri was the main philosophical source of many Spanish Liberation theologians like Fr Illacuria, martyred in El Salvador, or Jon Sobrino).

In Part II I shall also recall the temporal sequence of emergency of ST and the multiple personalist movements as part of a complex sequence, were we see how both movements were reacting to a crisis, or better a series of crises. Multilevel crises then they were not only theoretical but civilisational as well as existential crises.

In Part III. I'll try to show the parallels and convergent points between ERH's Speech thinking and the whole of personalist authors of his time, as well as showing some common inspirations

In part IV, I will single out some of the points that are close to other thinkers of the period after WW II: Arendt, Ricoeur, Lévinas and new trends in theology and philosophy

**Part I. Main theses out of ERH****1. The dignity of the person**

Speech thinking is basically a rediscovery of the person, as a key to understanding Creation, Revelation and Redemption: a rediscovery of both the God as personal, and the mankind as being made of persons, which for long have been misconstrued as subjects, or objects, or individuals. The name, the proper noun, is a symbol of this specificity of each person. ERH insists on the difference between names and concepts. The face (in Levinas's sense), is also another symbol of this uniqueness of each person

1.1. A personal God is talking to us through his Creation, through Revelation, and asking us to participate in the Redemption of the world and our own redemption

1.2. This means that persons are not closed entities but in the making, and this requires a new kind of thinking.

1.3. This cannot be thought in terms of the classical Greek substantial ontology, neither in a passive view of the relation of Subject to reality as Object. It requires another ontology (process like), another philosophical anthropology and has also ethical and meta-ethical consequences (by meta-ethics I mean the level of love which is beyond the level of justice).

1.4. The person is relational, is oriented towards the others and the Other, is called to freedom

**2. Being means being addressed. Priority of ethics over epistemology. Love beyond justice**

2.1. Person as interacting with God, the other human beings and the World.

2.2. Inter-subjectivity as prior to subjectivity. The ethics and meta-ethics of Dialogical thinking is a way of being, an openness to the other, in its alterity, a letting the other be him or herself, acknowledgment of his/her specificity.

2.3. Love and being loved is a primordial experience, the basis of thinking, acting and feeling.

„Gott hat mich gerufen darum bin ich. Man gibt mir einen eigenen Namen, darum bin ich“  
Angewandte Seelenkunde

**3 We are only in a community. But we are not individual elements of an impersonal collective, but free person in a free society. Speech thinking was from the beginning an enemy of both individualism and totalitarianism.**

3.1. Speech Thinking, dialogical thinking, is a New thinking rejecting ego/centric philosophies of subjectivity and false dilemmas: individuals and collectives are to be thought together.

3.2. The paradox of modernity lies in his confusion between autonomy and self creation. The new post-1789 thinking assumes the call to freedom, actually the whole Christian message is understood as a liberating force, but freedom from superstition and freedom in the sense of more autonomy is not to be confused with the freedom to make ourselves, neither to dominate Nature. We are co-creators of ourselves and our world, and this means something different than being the masters of ourselves or our world.

3.2. The self emerges only through the process of being born inside a community between people, caring about him/her, talking to him/her, loving him/her.

3.3. Speech thinking was very soon aware of the symmetrical dangers of individualism as egoism and collectivism as a way of degrading the person into a piece of the collective. Especially dangerous were the two totalitarianisms and ERH saw pretty soon the danger.

3.4. The pseudo-neutrality of science paved the way for the rise of Nazism (see ERH "Hitler and Prayer")

3.5. Isolation is one of the big problems of modern man: "Society is a hell as long as man or woman is alone" *I am an impure thinker* p19

**4 The historicity of man: ST as am situated thinking and acting, awareness of our historicity means awareness of our contextual limits. We are in the mode of perspective. History and meta-history**

ST is a kind of thinking aware of time, of our temporal dimension and the temporality of our thinking, this means:

4.1. ST it's historical (against formal universalism which pretends to be a-historical, timeless)

4.2. It is dynamic, evolving in time ,

4.3. It is a thinking that assumes that history is not written but open

4.4. Insofar is a break with idealism which pretends to speak in the name of an universal logos, pretends to be a-historical, their truth is supposed to be not related to time neither space

4.5. But it is also a break with the kind of materialism that assumes that history is under deterministic laws

4.6. Saying that Human beings are historical beings, means two things:

- a. that we are born inside a community, with a certain tradition,
- b. This tradition gives sense to our speech

But each generation is called to renew the tradition and the language not to repeat the past, in a mechanical way . This is important to avoid a misunderstanding as ERH as a “conservative”, he emphasizes that This tradition is open to be rewritten by each generation, that each generation must choose between a creative rewriting of tradition or a fixed repetition of the heritage.

4.7. This community and this tradition is the fruit of decisions and steps taken in the past. Decisions and moments that we remember in our calendars, especially epoch-making changes, key moments of the past. ERH was one of the first to call our attention to the meaning of this community-building collective moments that are remembered in his calendar method, anticipating recent theories of the role of collective memory.

There is no end to history in a Hegelian sense but metahistory as a normative/contrafactual or spiritual level (messianic-apocalyptic-eschatological element)

## 5. **Zeitdenken beyond materialism/idealism divide.**

5.1. ST as a ZD goes a step beyond the historical awareness of hermeneutical thinking à la Gadamer since assuming the anthropological meaning of this awareness has not only hermeneutic implications (an hermeneutical theory of truth)

5.2. but implies rethinking our historicity from a phenomenological view of three distinct modes of being/modes of living our historicity; our relation to a past, to our present and to the future. Having a living relation to the past means rewriting the meaning of tradition, letting the future be open.

5.3. Being historical means also that there is not destiny, we are free to write or better, co-write our future, ZD is against any kind of old and new paganism (as Spengler’s or Heidegger’s *Gechick*), for which there is no real future, actually is a way of reenacting the past, again and again (see ERH on Polybius). idealism is a variety of the relapse into mythical thinking where there is only room for repetition

5.4. another example of this relapse into cyclical thinking is Spengler (the danger of the return of a belief in destiny is present also in Heidegger

5.5. It means also a break with classical ontology in order to assume the consequences of a theory of novelty, of an open future as the possibility of emergence of something really new, ST is a break with the idealist tradition, that pretends to think the Whole, from Parmenides to Hegel. A thinking which pretends to be beyond speech, asking for a formal universal validity, pretending to speak in the name of an impersonal Logos, a universal Reason.

5.6. This point is related to the awareness of contingency and also of creativity of our praxis. A dynamic thinking is a thinking that can wait, that must wait, for others to interact, for things to happen, this means that it is an open thinking, not a closed system where there is no novelty, neither space for something new to happen, (idealist systems knows what is and will be)

## **6. This dynamism of history is explained by ST in terms of spirit,**

6.1. But the Spirit that move us is not the same as a universal Logos, through the critique of Hegel, ST arrives to an alternative philosophy of history, a philosophy of history that is a blend of science and reflexion (philosophical and theological)

6.2. Spirit as the main premise of ST: the best way to explain to non-monotheists the meaning of the spirit is Love, love give us strong to change, to endure difficulties, gives us awareness of our being part of a community, beginning with the love experienced as a child

6.3. Faith is a basic trust, wich grows also out of love, we trust our parents because we have been loved, we grow out of their care, and learn to care for others.

**7. Thought and language** Speech thinking means being aware of the dialectical relationship between thought and language, and the eventful character of language, language is not to be thought as a system but as a series of performances, speech.

7.1. There is no pure thought, language is not a tool . our thinking is shaped by our language (langue) but this langue is an open system, hamann and humboldt

7.2. meanings are not fixed one and for all but evolve, are resignified through creative speaking, (this is an insight share by Schleiermacher and Peirce, both forgotten by the time ERH wrote) and rediscovered by Josef Simon and Derrida

3.3. thinking in and through language implies rethinking the relationship between philosophy and literature: in two ways, literature is also a way to search truth.

Philosophy uses also "literary devices", symbols, metaphors, its own logic is not the formal logic of mathematicians but as a speech it addresses to the whole of us, our reason, our heart and our soul. The very personal style of ERH is not just the fruit of a search for originality in the artistic sense, but is the fruit of his speech thinking, thinking with and from language means employing all its possibilities, the same happens to Hamann often misunderstood as searching esotericism, while actually his style is also the result of an effort to explore the maximum of the potential lying in any language as a web of associations, connotations, metaphors, "etymological games" (very serious because its aiming to point to the forgotten meaning of some word)

**8. Individuals, persons and subjects:** ST wants to start from concrete human beings, persons with flesh and blood, in concrete space-time related situations, is a situated knowledge, and a situated praxis.

“Man is not a concept because his creation is not over” (Names and thoughts les noms et les pensees Au risqué du langage)

8.1. This will to concreteness is present already in Feuerbach

8.2. This means thinking individuals as persons as unique subjects not thinking the subjectes as being tokens of a given type, mere exemples.

8.3. Speech thinking is an alternative to every kind of structuralism or funcionalism that negates our personality assuming that we are only role-players molded by our place in society. This is the main critique of ERH to the Dewey-Confucius functionalist reductionism in The Christian future

8.4. It implies an holistic view of the human sciences, refusing the break between the science of the past (history ) and the science of the present (sociology, psychology) as well as the break between the science of the individual, the groups, and society: Seelenkunde vs sychology, as well as post-goethean sociology .ST is a post-disciplinary thinking, ERH insisted on the uni-versity of the different academic disciplines and traditions, being himself the best example of this convergence of historical, philosophical, philological, juridical thinking

8.5 His multidimensional method is related to a revindication of the multiformity of man,(see *The multiformity of man*, Boston 1935) his critiques of existing sociological and philosophical traditions is often expressed in terms of unilateralism: Descartes and Nietzsche are partly right and therefore wrong, since each forgets one side of human reality. In his “Farewell to Descartes” speaks of “the reductionism of the ego and the it” by remembering us that “the mind is not the center” , ERH connects with the old wisdom of the church fathers who consider the heart and not the mind the center.

8.9. The division of labor and the opposition between the thinkers and the doers , between the mind and the hands is also a way of deforming the multi-formity of man

**9. ST as a praxis philosophy or a way of life. New thinking as a new praxis was born out of an awareness of an urgency: the crisis of modern civilization. New thinking was meant to be also the seed and the witness of the beginning of a new period in history**

9.1. ST is about commitment and responsibility. Being a personalist demands a coherence between our utterances and our acts.

92. against the theoretism (Bakhtin) An ethics of answerability.

93 ST considers Revelation as an appellation to change, a call to love our brothers and sisters, a speech thinking cannot be a “mere thinker” there is no real thinking separated from life, ST is a moment in a continuum of words and deeds which is our life.

**10. Dialogical philosophy and dialogical praxis. Peace philosophy and peace building.** ST was born out of the personal experience of the first World War as a personal and collective horror. Peace became one of the main values of ST, peace must be built upon trust and critical knowledge of the mythical roots of war, the myth of the nation, the myth of the soldier sacrificing himself for the country (but a country that ask for self- immolation is an idol). ST becomes in ERH's work a socio-historical way of reading reality, the object is to uncover the energies that act through history in each society, his Sociology is a unified view of the past, the present and the potential future. His cross of reality is a way of emphasizing the dynamism across the two axes, space and time, the dynamic interaction between our past and our present, between our interior and our exterior. ERH engaged in the construction of interfaith initiatives like the magazine *Die Kreatur*, as well as inter-group solidarity, trying to counteract the Marxist vision of the workers as enemies of the bourgeoisie, in his own experiences first in Darmstadt in his work with Daimler Workers, later in Kreisau in Schlesien and later on at Camp James.

## Part II.

**Rosenstock-huessy and Rosenzweig were part of a bigger movement, the search of a New thinking (an alternative thinking, an alternative subjectivity, and alternative community-life).** ST is one of a series of projects born out of a diagnostic of the limitations and shortcuts of liberal bourgeois modernity and as one of the proposals to a New thinking that should help to bring to light new ways of being, a new kind of society

- a) Speech thinking was already in its pioneers aimed against both classical ontology and transcendental critique: Hamann's metacritique had also a social, political dimension, in his critique of enlightened despotism Hamann showed the paradox of a King-philosopher turning into a tyrant
- b) a second forgotten moment is the Fruhromantik (Schlegel, Schleiermacher) M Frank has showed that Schleiermacher was the first to assume the hermeneutical consequences of an awareness of our perspectiveness, our approach to truth is always context related and we cannot avoid seeing only one aspect of reality (the whole of reality is to be thought as the whole of human viewpoints which is a meta-historical perspective, Schleiermacher being a philosopher and theologian, reminds us in his *Dialektik* (1822) of the biblical quote "we see now through a veil ..."
- c) the last Schelling and its positive philosophy was already an attempt to go beyond idealism (after Rosenzweig, also Habermas and M. Frank explore the potential of this line) to take seriously time, and the positive philosophy of Schelling is a posteriori, existence cannot be deduced from reasoning. Schelling is also a forerunner of *Zeitdenken* in his critique of a false present that is nothing else than a perpetual past, real present must be created by a break with the past
- d) Feuerbach appeal to the concrete man, in its flesh and blood is acknowledged as an inspiration by Buber



- e) Kierkegaard criticizes the non-Christian character of the dominant pseudo-christianity and makes an effort to break both with the hegemonic philosophy, hegelianism, and the hegemonic theology, liberal lutheranism,
- f) In Marx we find again a project to a new thinking that should overcome metaphysics and simultaneously avoid idealism and materialism (as two opposite metaphysical assumptions both illegitimate) but as Wellmer has shown the ambiguities of the formulation of the Marxian program let space to unilateral readings like that of Engels which implied a new relapse in a pre-kantian materialistic ontology, while at the same time was the inspiration for a new praxis philosophy that implies a break with traditional ontology (this point is particularly developed by C. Castoriadis)
- g) Dostoevski give us both a critique of the nihilistic roots of modern society and the dangers of a rationalism dream of creating heaven on earth that can turn the world into a nightmare (this is present in his novels, *The Demons* or *The possessed*, as well as in his essays) and an alternative depicting the radical image of true believers, the strength of love, the messianic element (glimpses of heaven) play a key role in his work, (specially to be remembered *The dream of a ridiculous man*)
- h) the turn to a praxis philosophy at the end of the century is a paradoxical move, Bergson, Nietzsche, Dilthey, Simmel all of them were at the same time stimulating and intoxicating for the thinkers of the Rosenstock's Generation
- i) the line that the last Cohen, Rosenzweig and Buber explore almost simultaneously (texts written during WWI, and published afterwards) is already a dialogical philosophy pouring from elements implicit in the Jewish prophets. Rosenzweig engaged himself also in the interfaith dialogue already mentioned *Die Kreatur*, Russian thinkers like Berdiaev were invited.
- j) the Christian Speechthinking of H. Ehrenberg, F. Ebner, V. Weizsacker, and ERH is also a result of a re-reading of the Christian message beyond orthodoxy (either catholic or evangelical ) an special case is that of another Christian thinker close to the movement: F.Ch Rang. Ehrenberg was one of the first to introduce Eastern orthodox thinkers in Germany.
- k) a Christian personalism was developing in Russia since the beginning of the XXth century under the double impact of Dostoevski and his friend Soloviov on the one side, and the rise of Marxist challenges to the existing order (both Berdyaev and Bulgakov were closely related to the Marxist movements at the very beginning of his careers)
- l) theological debates within catholic and mainly evangelical theology (not only within dialectical theology) were also a catalyzing factor: Wittig, Barth, Tillich, Gogarten, Bultmann, Boenhoffer
- m) the search of a new kind of existential metaphysics non substantialist, neither confessional, a path opened by Jaspers (1932) and developed after WWII by Ricoeur
- n) Specially stimulating for the new thinking in Germany were the seminal works of Scheler

- o) By way of a personal reading of Dostoevski, Bakhtin arrived to a dialogical philosophy of man and culture which has many elements in common both with German and Russian personalism, but after 1922 the religious element was not allowed to be obvious, in his book of 1929 on Dostoevski beyond a theory of literature Bakhtin sketched a theory of man as a responsive and responsible person, the polyphony that Bakhtin shows as the essential discovery of Dostoevsky as a writer is based on the effort to let the characters speak not only among themselves but with the author who is trying to avoid the viewpoint of a judge.

### Part III.

#### **ERH and the personalist tradition (both in the strict sense share many common interests and some viewpoints.**

##### **1. The dignity of the person. A dynamic pneumatology. Seelenkunde vs psychology.**

1.1. First, there is a common root in biblical personalism: the dignity of the person is the starting point in the anthropology of both personalisms: the main one as well as the dialogical one. This theory of the person as distinct from a simple individual is first developed by the Church Fathers. Specially the Greek fathers while the western tradition was more influenced by the aristotelism of Boethius

1.2 A second trait common to both anthropologies is the experience of the soul as a dynamic identity capable of teshuva or metanoia, both the Jewish prophets and the Christian thinkers laid a special emphasis on the power of repentance and forgiveness. ERH speaks often about the ability to dye to our past and be born again as the kernel of the Christian message, as the main power of the Spirit

1.3. This dynamic vision of the person as process, it is not something we are but someone we are becoming, this dynamic idea of the person is already present in the Church fathers, in their theory of deificatio, and reappears in Kierkegaard's philosophy (see *Sickness unto death*) and emphasized also by Dostoevsky on his depiction of the strength of love to pardon and overcome determinisms, to liberate from the guilt and give the opportunity of a new beginning:

This is also the center of the *Star of Redemption* The disclosure of the self is the answer to the loving voice described in the heart of the Stern. The opposition self/soul is the key to this distinction between the natural and the spiritual core of any person,

We have a first indication of this movement from the self to the soul in the analysis of Cohen of the process of emergence of the soul (the process from individual to I in Cohens words). It was Cohen who reminded us Ezekial,13, 30-31:

“ Repent and turn away from all your transgressions, so that iniquity may not become a stumbling block to you. Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have committed and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! (New Amer. Stand. Bible)

Commenting this passage says Cohen „Diese möglichkeit der Selbstverwandlung macht das Individuum zum Ich; durch die möglichkeit der Abkehr aber von der Sunder wird das sündige

individuum zum freien Ich „ Religion der Vernunft p.225 This is crucial not only in the whole book of Cohen but in his whole system, actually is one of the keys for the transition from an ethics of the individual to the religious anthropology of the person .

This opposition between the individual and the I as a free person capable of rebirthing reappears in Rosenzweig in the opposition between the tragic self and the believing soul. The connection between love, forgiveness, repentance and redemption, is also explicit in Rosenzweig, right in the center of his Star, where he adds an analysis of the role of shame.

## 2. **Being means being addressed. Priority of ethics over epistemology. Love beyond justice**

Love doesn't judge. Dostoevski, Bakhtin. Prince Myshkin doesn't judge, love doesn't judge no one, like Jesus in the adulterous woman episode , he refuses to judge. Dostoevsky the author himself neither and this is very important for his whole poetics. Mikhail Bakhtin remarked, for the first time, that the whole poetics of Dostoevsky is based upon this idea of not judging his characters, not giving a definitive judgment about nobody; Dostoevsky's geniality as literary author lies precisely in creating an artistic new form, the polyphonic novel to express this essential characteristic of personhood according to Bakhtin and Dostoevsky:

“You shall not turn a living person into a voiceless object of a concluding knowledge. In every man there is always something that he and only he can reveal in a free act of self-consciousness and discourse, something not allowing an exterior indirect definition” Bakhtin

## 3. **We are only in a community.**

Community and “sobornost”. Dostoevski as well as Rosenzweig speak of isolation as the first step of the sickness of our time, the sickness out of too much abstract thinking. The process of healing is a process of return from isolation back to social life, back to community and communion with God. For both, Rosenzweig and Dostoevsky, the first step of sin is this move out of relation, out of relation of God, first of all, but also the break of the relation to the others, and to the world. The stepping out of life, of the flow of time, almost of space into this unreal non-place of the phantom-like world of “ideas” was the basis for self-closure, self-isolation, in the search of self-control. The Russian religious idea of sobornost rediscovered by the slavophiles in the middle of the XIX (Khomiakov) is developed by the Russian religious thinkers of the Silver Age, Authors that H. Ehrenberg introduced in Germany in a 2 volume anthology (translations were from his friend N Bubnov) this anthology played a key role shaping ideas of Bonhoeffer for his thesis *Sanctorum Communio*, as well as for his analysis of modernity in *Ethics*,<sup>3</sup>

**ERH also considers the isolation of modern man one of the main sources of the civilizational crisis.** This is explicit in his *The Christian future*. We find there even an analysis of the spatial isolation between the different aspects of our life, avoiding the building of a real community. Remember also my quote from “Farewell to Descartes: society is a hell as long as man/woman is alone”

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<sup>3</sup> see Ford)

#### 4. Historicity and perspectivism. Hermeneutical and postidealist consequences:

4.1. The polemics against idealism begins with Schleiermacher, the first personalist thinker to my view. He is also the first to draw hermeneutical conclusions of his critique of "totalism" the claim to know totality or to know from the viewpoint of the totality. We see only from a viewpoint and a universal perspective is possible only after history. Schleiermacher Dialektik

4.2. Speech thinking in the strict sense (Rosenstock and Rosenzweig) was from the beginning designed to overcome the idealism/materialism divide since consider both views abstractions from the real experience, which has a material and a spiritual side.

2 The second goal, parallel to this first one is to go beyond another polarity of abstractions: necessity and freedom, (the indicative and subjunctive ) again two opposite examples of partial thinking who abstract from the real situation in which we are both situated, limited and free.

3 There is no end to history in a Hegelian sense but metahistory as a normative /contrafactual or spiritual level (messianic-apocalyptic element

4 This synthetic way of thinking is common to all personalists: from Rosenstock and Rosenzweig to Ricoeur, they all seek a new way of thinking that shall avoid both extremisms, that looks for a sort of open synthesis, a third way.

5 In Fallible man (Ricoeur) we find two synthesis, theoretical and practical, both trying to think the "disproportion" between the finite and infinite in us.

6 This link between finite perspectivism and the metahistorical, eschatological whole is the main premise of Rosenzweigs theory of translation, as a messianic task, real translation is a work toward the unity, the speech of humanity which is now yet divided but waiting for their communion.

#### 5. Incarnation as a third way between idealism and materialism

The re-discovery of man and woman as an incarnated spirit is one of the main revolutions that ST shares with other personalists, from Bakhtin to Mounier each of them insists on the fact that we are neither a bodiless mind, nor a simple animal. The effort to assume the consequences of this awareness of our disproportion between a finite, bodily aspect and an spiritual impulse toward overcoming this attachment to the here and now is one of the main axes of personalistic meditation. This goes on with a new approach to creation as a living reality

#### 6. The dynamism in history: Spirit. Love, faith as basic trust, meta-history

When I speak of faith as *basic trust* I recall the way two German theologians have applied this concept of E. Erikson to a theological anthropology of faith: Hans Kung and W Pannenberg (see his Anthropology.

By Meta-history I mean to acknowledge the difference between:

-a secularization of messianism turned in a philosophy of history (both Rosenzweig who foresaw the possibility of tyranny out of the impatience to force the coming of the millennial Paradise on earth, and Rosenstock realized the presence of a false God in the totalitarianist movements. This idea of a Political Religion was also suggested by E. Voegelin

The shift to a discovery of the essential role of love (divine and human) as the main energy capable of fostering our own development is increasingly acknowledged by psychologists and theologians:

“The essence of love is that it fosters the selfhood of those on whom it is bestowed“ („das ist der Charakter der Liebe deren wesensbestimmung besteht darin, denjenigen, dem sie sich zuwendet, in seinem Selbstsein zu fördern“). Pannenberg, *Anthropology*

-and real messianism that sees the tension between temporality and eternity and is precisely an antidote to the temptation of conferring to the State the power to bring salvation.

Wayne Cristaudo has explained very well the role of redemption in ERH's work as a liberation from myth, an invitation to divinization, as well as a non totalitarian unification of mankind as the new orientation of history. See “revolution and the redeeming of the world” in Cristaudo and Baker eds

During the interwar period there was an extended gnostic trend, present in religious and atheist thinkers, (remember the language of Lukacs talking about the present age as sinful). It is important to remind all post-nietzschean thinkers that “Jesus didn't come to deny Life but to give her a bigger richness” (*Christian Future: Ch. Zukunft p150*)

His *Out of Revolution* is an analysis of the way “the manipulation of Revolution as vital force of change” has been acting through history since the Gregorian revolution. Both Mounier and Rougemont spoke of the personalist revolution as a force to renew the civilization in a moment of crisis,

Freedom is essential also in Berdyaev's reading of Dostoevski, In Berdyaev's own words: “He was ‘cruel’ because he would not relieve man of his burden of freedom, he would not deliver him from suffering at the price of such a loss, he insisted that man must accept an enormous responsibility corresponding to his dignity as a human being.”

## 7. Thought and Language

**All ST insists on the sacramental role of language and in the critique of its degradation to chat or a mere tool.**

Symbol and language: there is a surplus of meaning (Ricoeur) that can be related to the Spirit, as Emmerick reminds: “We may approach the Spirit in the Spirit but cannot exhaust the Spirit”.

This surplus of meaning has been associated by Josef Simon's philosophy of sign to freedom, insofar the meaning is never exhausted, interpretation as a permanent human work is a sign of his freedom

**8. Individuals, persons and subjects****9. The praxis of dialogue. Ethics of acknowledgment and the meta-ethics of love**

The new thinking is an invitation to praxis. Beyond theoretism (in Bakhtin's terms) beyond the spectator position of idealism (in Rosenzweig's words) is about commitment, doing what we have to do. I think this is also one of the reasons many of ERH's disciples were active members in the civil rights movement as well as in mobilizations against Vietnam war, is not just something generational, but the following of a certain coherent attitude learnt from the witness of ERH himself. *Bewahren*, is the German word coined by Rosenzweig to mean the old link between *wahrheit* and bearing witness, testimony. This is also the main impulse of the European personalist movement: an invitation to act, to get involved in society, to be the seed of a new civilization.

**10 Peace building and the praxis of dialogue in European personalism.**

The initiatives of ERH can be compared with the federalist program sketched by the French personalists, C Roy has spoken about Alexandre Marc a key figure, together with Denis de Rougemont on the building of a federalist, transnational movement before and after WWII.

In his paper C.Roy reminds us of the links between ERH followers in Germany (Carl Dietrich von Trotha, Horst von Einsiedel, and Helmut J. Graf von Moltke) and Harro Schulze-Boysen had been a close associate of Marc from the year 1931. As a Russian émigré, Marc was acquainted with Berdyaev who published an important article "The end of Renaissance" at ERH's magazine, *Die Kreatur*, and later at the newly founded magazine *Esprit*, the main focus of French personalism since his creation in 1932 two key contributions. The first writing of Mounier was precisely an invitation to "Recreate the Renaissance" *Esprit*, 1, 1932.

**Part IV . Actuality of ERH: Persons, subjects, individuals****The person as a creative, dynamic, open ended process**

A philosophical anthropology based on creativity, distinguishing the subject as role- interiorizing, rule-following and the person as individual, is one of the ideas developed by the personalists before and after WWII: in Mounier's *Manifeste*, as well as the in the more academical works of Nedoncelle. The insistence on the emergence of the new in Arendt, Castoriadis, Levinas, Ricoeur point to the same inner capacity of giving birth (Arendt speaks of nativity) to something and someone who was not even predictable, this idea which is sometimes openly expressed, sometimes implicit, has its roots, of course, in the idea of the inhabitation of the Spirit in us. Some authors underlie the openness to the future, the forward side of ERH's Cross of reality, like Rougemont or Castoriadis, while others are more aware of the role of collective memory and tradition as a source of sense and orientation, like Ricoeur.

The personalist turn is a move against one trend in modernity, the trend to polarize between individualism as egoism or a vision of the individual as produced by society. ERH speaks of the

functionalism already in *The Christian future* were we find very sharp critiques of Dewey as a new Confucius, actually the tone of the polemics may be unjust to Dewey's intentions but not to the later readings of this tradition, since Parsons developed exactly the kind of sociological reductionism Rosenstock was denouncing on the figure of Dewey: the attempt to reduce the citizens to mere individuals, pieces of a machine, acting according to what is expected. This view is denounced almost simultaneously by Castoriadis, and years later by Ricoeur, Arendt, Touraine or Levinas. It is worth recalling that the same example of ERH, that of the mankind reduced to the kind of life of the

**The calendar method and collective memory.** The calendar method of Rosenstock was thought to bring to light the role of significant past events in shaping individuals and communities. This reminding of the formative role of key events is also a main topic for Ricoeur who speaks the rituals by which a community remembers and reenacts the events which have a founding role (Des cérémonies de commémoration grâce auxquelles une communauté quelconque réactualise en quelque sorte les événements qu'elle considère comme fondateurs de sa propre identité; il s'agit donc là d'une structure symbolique de la mémoire sociale. On ne sait pas s'il existe des sociétés sans rapports à des événements inauguraux qui, après coup, apparaissent comme l'origine de la communauté elle-même ! » Ricoeur, "L'idéologie et l'utopie : deux expressions de l'imaginaire social". In: *Autres Temps. Les cahiers du christianisme social*. N°2, 1984. pp. 53-64).

Ricoeur is very aware of the pathologies of collective memory of the oversimplifications of the past and its role in freezing the identity of a collective (See Kaplan, D.M. *Ricoeurs critical theory*, SUNY, 2003 pp 96-97)

**The critique of modernity.** I think we can find in ERH's critique of modernity some issues converging with other critiques that are also an effort to overcome the limits of a narrow rationalism:

As I said the first metacritique to the limits of modern reason is already sketched by Hamann and some aspects of it are present in Herder, Schlegel and Schleiermacher. The universalism of a "pure" reason is rejected by Hamann who, like ERH is an "impure thinker", the reinvigoration of the multiformity of man is also essential in Schillers work, his *Letters on the aesthetic education* show the need to go beyond an utilitarian reason, to speak to the whole of man, a man who works, sings, plays, and loves.

The social critique of Marxism has also a twofold potential as I mentioned, on the one side he too is asking for a society that would allow the mankind to overcome the division of labor that separates intellectual and manual work, this is also an important issue for ERH and Rougemont who wrote in 1936 *Thinking with hands (Penser avec les mains)* where he draws a critique of the rationalism of modernity very close to some of ERH comments. The difference between repetition and creativity is essential in the works of French Marxist authors like H. Lefebvre, or Castoriadis. Both ERH and H. Lefebvre developed a sociology of space wholly unaware of each other, the way ERH examines the gap between the inner city and the suburbs is an anticipation of the way Lefebvre criticizes the way the citizens have lost their right to give shape to their cities.

In his first theoretical works, like *Angewandte Seelenkunde* the therapeutics of a decadent modernity is sketched by analyzing the different kinds of dangers (the separation of means and ends in the positivism) this analysis of the dangers looming over our civilization is developed in his Speech "In defense of the grammatical method" (1939) where he speaks of the four dangers (anarchy, decadence, revolution and war). His critique of Cartesian thinking reappears later on

This critique of the limits of a modernity who has a too narrow definition of reason, progress or mankind, links with the analysis of the dialectics of modernity that several authors work out in the same time:

-Rougemont *Penser avec les mains*, 1936

-*Dialectics of Enlightenment* (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1945)

More recently the critique of the liberal self and the "Malaise of modernity" in Charles Taylor, especially his critique of the punctual self (*Sources of the self*) shows elements to be compared as well as the Critique of modernity in Touraine and his distinction between actors and subjects, his renewed attack on functionalism.

### **3. Post-goethean sociology which is actually a synthesis of history, psychology and sociology**

In order to keep open the program of a theory of man as person, not as an individual, a token of some species, there are also moves in this direction:

-in psychology and pedagogy (it is well known the influence of Buber on Rogers and Fromm as well as the influence of personalism in the dialogical pedagogy of Paulo Freire, the Brazilian founder of critical pedagogy)

-in sociology, mainly anti-structuralist, anti-functional theories like those of Touraine, Castoriadis, and Ricoeur

### **4. Post-ontological thinking**

M. Krings has developed a very stimulating suggestion of what this break with substantialism may mean to a philosophical reflection on God, by translating the death of God as the death of the tradition which thinks God in an objectifying way. Now this new way of thinking not about God but interacting with the personal God, rediscovers simultaneously the personal character of mankind too. The freedom of God is according to Krings that what makes possible our finite freedom (see article God in Krings, *Handbuch*)

This turn is closely related to the move of theology beyond substantialism and theism. In a very important paper, C. Gardner's "In whom we live", the author reminds us of the coincidences between ERH and Berdyaev anticipating new trends that show a panentheistic approach to reality. Gardner reminds the impact of Berdyaev on Bishop Robinson,



particularly his saying, in *Spirit and Reality*: "God is like a whole humanity rather than like nature, society, or concept." This well informed paper mentions also Marcus Borg but I would like to add also Leonard Boff the famous Brazilian liberation theologian who introduced panentheism and his theological correlate perikhoresis in his book on Trinity and society, and later on expanded this panentheistic approach in his *Experimenting God. The transparency of everything*, 2002.

Gardner is also the first one to my knowledge who pointed to Bakhtin and Rosenstock's parallelisms and their common sources. In Russia I know Vitaly Makhlin has also worked on these parallelisms but even in Russia I had troubles to find his works although I am fluent in Russian.

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