

*A paper for discussion at the roundtable on Rosenstock-Huessy's work
Norwich, Vermont, July 6-7, 2006*

In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being:
Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy and Nikolai Berdyaev as Prophets of Panentheism

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In his widely-read recent book, *The Heart of Christianity*, the New Testament scholar Marcus Borg says that Christians in North America are living through a time of “major conflict” and “paradigm change.”¹ He describes an earlier paradigm that interprets the Bible literally and conceives of God in terms of “supernatural theism.”² He contrasts this with what he calls an “emerging paradigm,” one that “sees the Bible metaphorically” and replaces theism with what can best be called “panentheism.”³ The new paradigm “has been visible for well over a hundred years” and “in the last twenty to thirty years, it has become a major grassroots movement among both laity and clergy in ‘mainline’ ... Protestant denominations.”⁴ That’s certainly true in my own denomination, the United Church of Christ.⁵

In this paper I’ll describe how two relatively-neglected Christian thinkers, Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy (1888-1973) and Nikolai Berdyaev (1874-1948), anticipated today’s crisis in religion and made significant contributions that help us move from supernatural theism to panentheism. Specifically, both of them interpreted the Holy Spirit and the Trinity in ways which make sense to contemporary secular minds. For them the Bible was filled with metaphor which, like poetry, told us vital truths about who we are—and who we might become.

The first part of the paper will present some of these two thinkers’ special contributions to panentheism, while the second part will tell a bit about how these contributions have attracted attention in Western Europe and the US since the 1960s—and in Russia since the collapse of communism in 1991.

While Borg’s book provides a brief introduction to panentheism, a more searching presentation of it is made in another excellent recent book, *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being: Panentheistic Reflections on God’s Presence in a Scientific World*.⁶ Edited by Philip Clayton and Arthur Peacocke, it draws its title from St. Paul’s statement in Acts: God is he in whom “we live and move and have our being.”⁷ I’m using that same title for this paper to

underline their point, and Borg's, that panentheism is as respectable a way of envisioning God as is theism. Theism describes a *supernatural* God, one who is essentially outside us, the "wholly other." The heresy of pantheism describes a God who is everywhere, just the same as all the forces of nature. But panentheism is not heretical at all. By adding that little preposition "en," it describes God as *in* us and us *in* God, just as St. Paul writes.⁸

An important voice in suggesting what panentheism can and should mean was that of Dietrich Bonhoeffer (1906-1945). In a Nazi prison he wrote:

Our relation to God is not a 'religious' relationship to the highest, most powerful, and best Being imaginable—that is not authentic transcendence—but our relation to God is a new life in 'existence for others', through participation in the being of Jesus. The transcendental is not infinite and unattainable tasks, but the neighbour who is within reach in any given situation.⁹

Among the more recent advocates of panentheism have been the well-known Anglican bishops John A. T. Robinson, and John Spong.¹⁰ Episcopal theologian Matthew Fox has been another strong advocate and interpreter of it.¹¹ Several of the writers in the Clayton-Peacocke book point to the philosophers Alfred North Whitehead (1861-1947) and Charles Hartshorne (1897-2000) as the sources of today's understanding of panentheism.¹² However, I think that their rather formal and philosophical version of the concept should be seen as only one of many sources.¹³ There is a contribution to a stream of thought which one finds even in ancient Greece, as St. Paul acknowledged.¹⁴ Over the centuries it has been developed, often by persons called mystics or heretics, such as Meister Eckhart (1260-1328) and Paracelsus (1493-1541).¹⁵ It is that larger stream which led on to such recent lively and informal thinkers as Berdyaev, Rosenstock-Huussy, and Bonhoeffer.

Two Neglected Prophets

Turning now from those introductory comments, I'll introduce my two prophets, men whose work I've been studying since my college days in the 1940s.

Nikolai Berdyaev, who was expelled by Lenin from the Soviet Union in 1922, became a principal interpreter of Russian religious thought to the West and an innovative Christian thinker in his own right. Particularly in England, but also on the continent and in the US, he had a wide influence. Only in recent decades has he become relatively "neglected."¹⁶

Rosenstock-Huessy, the son of a Jewish banker in Berlin, was a convert to Christianity at age 18. He belonged to a group of Christian and Jewish thinkers who focused on the meaning of language and dialogue, a group which included his friends Franz Rosenzweig (1886-1929) and Martin Buber (1878-1965).¹⁷ As soon as Hitler came to power in 1933, Rosenstock-Huessy left Germany to accept a position at Harvard. In 1935 he came to Dartmouth College where he taught his own social philosophy to generations of enthusiastic students.¹⁸ In this paper I'll deal considerably more with his thought than with Berdyaev's, partly because I was quite close to him personally and partly because he has yet to attract anything like Berdyaev's following.¹⁹

While Rosenstock-Huessy's admirers have been modest in numbers, they have certainly been notable in stature. Reinhold Niebuhr and W. H. Auden gave eloquent expression to their assessment of his work.²⁰ Theologians Walter Ong, Harvey Cox, Leslie Dewart, Richard Shaull, and Martin Marty hailed his importance, as did such social critics as Lewis Mumford and David Riesman.²¹

Panentheism in Russian Orthodoxy

As I was completing my philosophy studies at Dartmouth in 1947—and preparing for graduate studies in Russian history at the Sorbonne, Rosenstock-Huessy, put me in touch with Berdyaev, who was living in Paris. Eugen (as I'll now call him) had become acquainted with Berdyaev in the 1920s when they both had contributed to a new magazine called *Die Kreatur* ("The Creature").²² Unfortunately, Berdyaev died in March 1948, just before I was to meet him. Still, I was able to contact persons interested in his work at the St. Sergius Institute, a seminary of the Russian Orthodox Church which had been founded in 1925 by Berdyaev's colleague and fellow émigré, Sergius Bulgakov (1871-1944).²³

Now the plot thickens—because the prominent Orthodox theologian Bulgakov was one of the first to call his own thought by the name of "panentheism."²⁴ Both Berdyaev and Bulgakov were spiritual heirs of the most central figure in Russian philosophy, Vladimir Solovyov (1853-1900). Solovyov's famed *Lectures on God-Humanity* (1878-1881) were attended by both Dostoevsky and Tolstoy.²⁵ Dostoevsky's resulting friendship with the much younger Solovyov is often cited as having led the author to model Alyosha Karamazov on Solovyov.²⁶ A reader of Solovyov's lectures (currently available as *Lectures on Divine Humanity*) will find in them some of the most distinctive 19th century expressions of panentheism.²⁷

Berdyayev saw Solovyov's lectures as making a breakthrough in this understanding of God. As he put it:

Russian creative religious thought has introduced the idea of God-humanity. As in Jesus Christ, the God-Man, there occurred an individual incarnation of God in man, so similarly there should occur a collective incarnation of God. God-humanity is the continuation of the incarnation of God; it brings forward the problem of the incarnation of the truth and righteousness of Christ in the life of humanity, in human culture and human society.²⁸

The tendency of Eastern Orthodox thinking to be so "incarnational," so much more panentheistic than theistic is attested to by the fact that one of the contributors to the book, *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being* is the well-known Orthodox theologian Bishop Kallistos (Timothy Ware). Bishop Kallistos makes the point as follows: "Among all too many Christian thinkers . . . there has been . . . a widespread tendency to speak as if God the creator were somehow external to the creation. . . . All such imagery is sadly defective."²⁹

God is Like a Whole Humanity

Exploiting the breakthrough that Solovyov had made, Berdyayev wrote some thirty books that speak of a God who is incarnate within his creation. In *Spirit and Reality*, he wrote what seemed to me a sort of culminating statement: "Spirit—the Holy Spirit—is incarnated in human life, but it assumes the form of a whole humanity rather than of authority....God is like a whole humanity rather than like nature, society, or concept."³⁰

This statement of Berdyayev's, so clearly panentheistic, seems to provide a perfect contrast with the theistic idea that God is the "almighty," an all-knowing and all-powerful supreme being who is external to humanity, a being who called the world into existence and who still presides over it. "Whole humanity" evidently includes all creation, the earth, and universe, since humanity could certainly not exist without this physical setting, this *space*. Similarly, "whole humanity" includes all *time*, since we are not whole unless we include our beginnings and our end. And "whole" also points to what makes us whole; in religious terms, the Spirit.

Now I've already noted how Eugen based his own thinking on a new understanding of language. He described God as "the power which makes us speak" and speech itself as "the body of the Spirit."³¹ After a lifetime of writing on such themes, he collected most of his essays on

language in a two-volume work, *Die Sprache des Menschengeschlechts* (“The Speech of Humankind”), published in Germany in 1963-64.³² To relate Eugen’s thought with Berdyaev’s, we became human beings as we learned to speak. It is living speech, the dialogue which human beings have with each other, that moved us, over the millennia of evolution, from being inhuman mammals to finally becoming *members of whole humanity*. As I put it in a book I’ve written on Eugen’s work, we became cells in God’s body.³³ And we might think of those cells as “sentences.” *We are each a sentence in the story of whole humanity, a humanity which becomes holy as speech makes it whole.*

If God is like a whole humanity, then he or she is not aloof from our suffering. This God is involved in the experience of war and revolution, such as we’ve had over the last century. As Bonhoeffer wrote, “only a suffering God can help.”³⁴ Perhaps we could even say that God only knows himself in us, only enjoys himself in us, and has no other “being” than his life in us. Berdyaev liked to quote a challenging line from Angelus Silesius (1624-1677): “Without me God cannot live for a second.”³⁵

It helps, I think, to reflect on whole humanity in Trinitarian language. God as Spirit is like our calling to serve the *future* life of whole humanity. God as Son is like our sacrificial living in the *present* life of whole humanity. And God as Father is like the gifts we’ve inherited from whole humanity’s *past* creations.

Before going on, I should answer the objection that “whole humanity” may sound impersonal, something like Comte’s lifeless “great being.”³⁶ But God imagined this way still addresses us personally. That is, all the generations that have gone before us, all over the world, down to our own parents, have spoken the Word that addresses us now, summoning us as *thou*, moving us to respond as *I*.

Having now related Berdyaev’s thought to Eugen’s, I’ll turn more specifically to a discussion of Eugen’s special contributions.

A Unifying Discipline

While he did not describe his work as contributing to pantheism, and while he criticized all “isms” as “frozen ways of thinking,” I think it’s clear that, if faced with a choice between theism, pantheism, and panentheism, Eugen would have preferred the last.³⁷ Although he wrote a great deal about Christianity, he felt that the project of theology had died in the heat of the two World

Wars. The all-loving God of traditional theism was either powerless or difficult to imagine after Buchenwald and Auschwitz—or the incredible slaughter of the wars. Instead of trying to resurrect theology per se, Eugen urged that we build a new discipline, a higher sociology, one in which the concerns of all the human sciences—including religion and theology—would be interwoven together.

His major work *Out of Revolution: Autobiography of Western Man* and his German *Soziologie* suggest how this might be accomplished.³⁸ In his several works on language, he says that the patterns we see in speech, in grammar itself, offer us a method for the human sciences, including theology. His “speech method,” which he also called “the grammatical method,” would serve as the animating “motor” of the unifying discipline, for which he proposed the name “metanomics.” That name was intended to suggest a discipline which would go beyond (*meta*) the laws (*nomoi*) of the separate existing human sciences—and thereby unite them.³⁹

Eugen’s friend Paul Tillich is often cited as contributing to panentheism through his suggestion that we think of God as “the ground of being.”⁴⁰ Further, we can realize God’s power in us by recognizing that we all have “an ultimate concern.”⁴¹ I think Eugen and Berdyaev improve on Tillich by being more specific as to what establishes the ground of our being and gives us an ultimate concern. When we recognize that God is the power which makes us speak, we realize that it is our gift of *language* which enables us to know the ground of our being—and that ground is our life as a whole humanity.

High Speech

One obstacle to grasping what Eugen means by language as the key to understanding both God and humanity is that we have just lived through several generations during which language has been presented to us as a wonderful *tool*, an instinct, like blinking to keep our eyes clear. From the linguistic analysis which dominated philosophy for decades after the Second World War to language in the naturalistic idiom of Noam Chomsky and Stephen Pinker, speech has been ripped from its place in the life of the spirit. Pinker’s recent tremendously successful book, *The Language Instinct*, which seems accurate as far as it goes, still continues anthropology’s presentation of language as a built-in device, one which enables us to move an idea out of one brain and into another.⁴² By contrast, Eugen and his intimate collaborator Franz Rosenzweig see speech from a much larger perspective: as the power that has created and continues to create

humanity, as what links the divine with the human. As Rosenzweig put it, in his widely-hailed book, *The Star of Redemption*, “One knew that that the distinction between immanence and transcendence disappears in language.”⁴³ (While *The Star* is a daunting book, Rosenzweig’s essay, “The New Thinking” provides a quite accessible introduction to its presentation of language.)⁴⁴

To clarify his and Rosenzweig’s new understanding of language, Eugen said that we should distinguish between the chatter, the “low speech” that fills our ears so often and what he calls “high speech.” Only when we make this distinction will we be able to see speech as “the body of the Spirit.”

Let me try to capture what Eugen means by “high speech.”⁴⁵ Such speech is the *intentional, relational, and dialogical speech* which we use when we seek to tell the truth or establish relations with others. It’s the language we use to advance any cause, large or small, social or personal. It’s not the language we use when we say “please pass the salt” or “goodbye,” but it’s rare that we go through a day without using the higher form of speech. As a matter of fact, there’s a tiny touch of high speech in “please pass the salt,” since the word “please” establishes a cordial relationship. Similarly, “goodbye” is a vestigial remnant of its origin in the heartfelt blessing “God be with you.” The higher form of speech is “bound to time and nourished by time,” as Rosenzweig expressed it.⁴⁶ Whenever we use such speech, we create a tension between past and future; we intend to change the listener and our times.

It also helps to grasp the idea of high speech when we make a distinction between what we mean by “language” and what we mean by “speech.” Language can be simply any use of words, while true speech involves not only a speaking but a listening. The word which we have heard from another stays with us and frames what we do, from our smallest to our largest actions.

In other words, high speech always implies its enactment. The words that initiate such speech stay alive and guide us through their realization. We never leave the fields of force created by high speech, from a well-timed word of encouragement from a parent or teacher to reading the words of the Bible.

While it’s certainly not always the higher form, even what goes on inside our minds is speech. As Eugen puts it, “thinking is nothing but a storage room for speech.”⁴⁷

Although Eugen emphasizes the oral form of speech in his writings, I think he implies that all intentional human expression is high speech. From the first drawings of a bison in caves, to tribal

dancing and chanting, to a symphony by Beethoven, to a painting by Paul Klee, to a house by Frank Lloyd Wright, to a book by Dostoevsky, to a poem by Robert Frost, we speak about who we are, we keep the past alive, and we feel called to our future.

Speech and Reality

One of my early efforts to express the ideas presented above was when I wrote an introduction to Eugen's book *Speech and Reality*, a collection of his key essays on language.⁴⁸ The lead essay, "In Defense of the Grammatical Method," made the largest claims for his envisioned unifying discipline, a higher sociology, contrasting its basic assumptions with those of theology and natural science.⁴⁹ In my introduction, I myself made large claims for the author, saying that the book's purpose was to "dethrone the Cartesian method as the basis of all science."⁵⁰ Reviewing the book in *Commonweal* magazine, the theologian John Macquarrie took me to task for claiming too much when I said that Eugen had "made an epoch-making discovery for the future of man's knowledge about himself."⁵¹ Still, Macquarrie's appreciation of the book is evident in the clarity with which he summed up its main point:

The author believes...that the social sciences suffer from being forced into the methodological mold of the natural sciences. Anyone acquainted with the kind of psychology and sociology commonly taught in the United States today could hardly fail to agree....But where do we look for a better method? Rosenstock-Huessy suggests that we look to language. Speech is the basic social reality. Grammar, in turn, is the science which describes and analyzes the structures of language. Hence, grammar is the foundation for developing a methodology for the social sciences.⁵²

The Cross of Reality

In my introduction to *Speech and Reality*, I offered my view (which Eugen shared) that Martin Buber's seminal work, *I and Thou* had established Buber's understanding of language and dialogue so successfully that Eugen's quite different "speech-thinking" was all-too-thoroughly overshadowed.⁵³

A brief exploration of the differences between Buber's personalist presentation of the life of dialogue and Eugen's larger language universe will make clear why Eugen sees a methodology

for the social sciences in the grammatical structures of language.

Buber describes us as living in a *two-fold reality*. On the one hand, we can have a cold *I-it* relation to another person or the world. On the other hand, we can have a warm *I-thou* relationship to another, to the world—or to God. *In both cases, the action starts from the I.*

By contrast with Buber, Eugen says that we live in a *four-fold reality*. First, as a listener to the imperatives which address humankind collectively, we hear ourselves addressed as *thou*. Such imperatives may have been established in the course of history or may have first been spoken in our own generation. In either case, they are our calling to make the future, to enter *future time*. In response to having been so addressed, we discover our *I*, the subjective, singular, and *inward self (our inner space)*. We then seek to return the gift of having been addressed by being creative ourselves, by contributing to the generations of humankind. As we do so, we must form a dual, a *we*, as in marriage, the founding of an enterprise, or any history-making attachment. In effect, we are carrying *past time* forward. Finally, in the *outside space of the world*, we become known by others in the third person, as *he* or *she*.⁵⁴ Thus, in each of our roles, we become different *grammatical* persons. Note that, in Eugen's speech capsule, *the action starts from others*.

Now all four of those “speech acts” take place within four different orientations to our human reality: to future and past in time, to inward and outward in space. We can see that those four orientations form a cross, one which Eugen called “The Cross of Reality.” Needless to say, this fourfold reality, with its four kinds of language and four grammatical persons, is more complicated and less easy to grasp than Buber's *I and Thou*.

To help his students comprehend the import of the Cross of Reality in his Dartmouth classroom, Eugen often drew diagrams of it on the blackboard. For the reader's reference I'm providing just such a diagram at the end of this paper. (While Eugen's diagrams usually showed only one subject at a time, such as our four grammatical persons, I'm showing all the subjects which I touch on in this paper.)⁵⁵

One of Eugen's most concise presentations of the Cross of Reality is as follows:

Unless we decide perpetually between these four ways of being, truth loses its hold on us. Only those who fight for the future, for the past, for the outer order, and the inner peace, alternately, may represent the spirit in humanity. Those on the other hand, who only recognize one of these four arms of the cross—or two,

perhaps—may be clever, may be intelligent, may be efficient, may be an authority, but they have no spiritual life.⁵⁶

I picked that quotation because it will help me link up what I've just written about the Cross of Reality with the earlier points I've been making about Eugen's contribution to panentheism. When one reflects on the import of the cross, one sees that our spiritual life is lived at the crossroads of *everyday* life's times and spaces, not in some private space. It follows that this cross shows us the interface between secular and religious thought. Indeed, it shows us how to integrate them. The cross depicts the fact that there are four basic kinds of language—imperative, subjective, narrative, and objective. Each is related to one of the four grammatical persons which I presented above—*thou, I, we, he or she*; and those persons define our roles at different times in our lives. Every significant experience in life is lived out in the sequence of a counter-clockwise movement around the arms of the cross: from hearing an imperative, to subjective response, to narrative action, and finally objective description. The cross is an image, a model, of how we are formed by speech.

Examining the cross, we see how Eugen differs from Buber in thinking about God. In Buber there is an independent *I* who reaches out to God as the great *Thou*. In Eugen, we are addressed by God as *thou*, and only by this address do we discover ourselves as *I*. In other words, *God speaks first and we are only responders!*

At the end of his two-volume work on language, Eugen makes a remarkable statement about imperatives and our response to them:

The Son establishes the proper relationship between the spoken word and the lived life. Words should be commands that are given and promises that are made. Life consist of commands that are carried out and prophecies that are fulfilled. This, we saw, is the real goal of all speech and all ritual since man first spoke.⁵⁷

While mentioning only one person of the Trinity, Eugen is actually dealing here with all three. When we hear 'the spoken word,' coming to us as 'commands,' addressing us as *thou*, we are listening to the Spirit, and feel called toward the future. As we respond to the command, subjectively as *I*, we become Son, with a promise to take action. If we then carry out that action, through a 'lived life,' we work with others and become a *we*—and thus participate in history's narrative, the creative life of the Father.

I hope that these reflections have shown the reader how the Cross of Reality provides us with

an image of how speech works in us and how the Trinity works in us. While it is definitely not “the cross of Christ,” it certainly is a panentheistic image.⁵⁸ In that sense, it portrays how we live in God and He in us.

While Berdyaev provided a powerful image when he said “God is like a whole humanity,” Eugen gives more substance to that image by showing how whole humanity is built up through the powers of speech.

II. Recent History: How Berdyaev and Rosenstock-Huessy Have Fared Since the 1960s

A Tale of Two Bishops

I’ll start this recent history with Berdyaev. It’s intriguing to see how his expression “God is Like a Whole Humanity” entered contemporary theological discussion.

The history begins in 1963 when Anglican Bishop John A. T. Robinson published a remarkable book called *Honest to God*.⁵⁹ That little book became a blockbuster, selling over a million copies, evidently because readers were ready to hear a bishop speak with a fully contemporary voice. Relying on Bonhoeffer, Tillich, and Rudolf Bultmann, the good bishop spoke eloquently about alternatives to theism.

However, it was not until 1967, in a follow-up book called *Exploration into God*, that Robinson became quite specific about the fact that he was working to articulate panentheism.⁶⁰ In the book’s prologue he describes how, as a student, he began to read Berdyaev—and how his Russian mentor led him on to Meister Eckhart and others. Then, toward the end, he writes, “Berdyaev, in fact, probably comes as near as anyone to the theological synthesis we are seeking.”⁶¹ But it is only at the very end, in a concluding paragraph on panentheism, that he focuses upon the quotation from Berdyaev which so attracted me when I first read *Spirit and Reality*: “God is like a whole humanity rather than like nature, society, or concept.”⁶² Finding that Bishop Robinson had such respect for Berdyaev gave me a sense of vindication; my decades pursuing my Russian mentor and his predecessor Solovyov had not been wasted.⁶³

In his well-received 1998 book *Why Christianity Must Change or Die*, Bishop John Spong describes how he considers himself to be carrying forward the unfinished work of Bishop Robinson.⁶⁴ In his chapter “Beyond Theism to New God Images,” he describes how Whitehead and others have contributed to panentheism. He then expounds on Tillich’s panentheistic image

of God as the “ground of being” and asks, “Is it possible that we bear God’s image because we are part of who God is?”⁶⁵ That’s a question I’ve tried to answer—with a yes—in the first part of this paper.

Three Thinkers for the Third Millennium

During the 1960s a Rosenstock-Huessy Society was formed in Germany, and I was invited to join its board. At an early meeting, when I learned that Dietrich Bonhoeffer’s twin sister, Sabine, was a Society member, I suggested that she write an article to point out how similar her brother’s thought was to Eugen’s. That she promptly did, under the title “Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy and Dietrich Bonhoeffer—Two Witnesses to the Change in Our Time.”⁶⁶

I learned of another linkage of Eugen with Bonhoeffer when I first met Harvey Cox. That was in 1964, the year before he woke up the American religious establishment with his book, *The Secular City*.⁶⁷ Cox was the speaker at the annual meeting of the United Church of Christ in Vermont. His theme was that the great Western revolutions and today’s secular society were the fruit of the Christian era. I approached him after his talk and said it reminded me of Eugen’s book *Out of Revolution*.

“Oh, yes,” Cox replied. “That’s where I got these ideas.” We continued on that subject as I drove him to the bus station. I learned about his forthcoming book, and he told me how indebted he was to Eugen.

“How did you first hear about him?” I asked.

“It was in Berlin in 1961. I was at a meeting of Evangelical Church leaders, and a vote was taken as to which three Christian thinkers of our time would still be important in the next millennium. It was agreed that these would be Paul Tillich, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, and one Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy. Since then I’ve been reading your professor’s work quite avidly.”

That 1964 meeting with Cox led on to his convening a seminar on Eugen’s work and soon to the 1966 republication of Eugen’s *The Christian Future*.⁶⁸ In his review of that book for *The Christian Century*, Martin Marty wrote:

It has never been possible to pigeon-hole Rosenstock-Huessy...His juxtaposition of conventional genius and genial unconventionality is both disconcerting and creative. In 1946 Rosenstock-Huessy was ahead of his time—and he still is today.

In this book he writes about secularization, hermeneutics, the gift of language, the

meaning of personhood, and Christianity, without old-line appeal to transcendence.⁶⁹

Synchronizing Antagonistic Distemporaries

Early in this paper I made the point that panentheism is thoroughly at home in Eastern Orthodox theology. Now, as I'm coming to the end, I'll tell the story of how Eugen's version of it has been welcomed in post-communist Russia—in the same Orthodox circles where Berdyaev, Solovyov, and Bulgakov are key figures.

How do I know about those circles? The answer needs some background.

In Eugen's essay "In Defense of the Grammatical Method," he speaks of his higher sociology as having the task of "synchronizing antagonistic distemporaries."⁷⁰ In other words, its purpose is *to establish peace in society*. By "distemporaries" he means people who have had different experiences of time, that is those who do not feel that they share a common history. In the world of 2006, with the war in Iraq and a Middle East out of synch with the West, it's clear that our most pressing task today is just such synchronizing of antagonistic distemporaries. Things seem to be falling apart.

Twenty-five years ago, in the world of 1981, at the beginning of the Reagan administration, we experienced a similar sense of impending catastrophe. The Cold War began to approach white heat and nuclear holocaust did not seem remote. In response to that threat—and the sense that the US and USSR had stopped speaking to each other—many groups of Americans gathered together in a movement called "citizen diplomacy." Starting in 1982, that movement was based on sending small groups of Americans to talk with their counterparts in the USSR—and inviting those "Soviets" to visit and talk widely in the US. Eventually, over twenty thousand citizens from each country participated in these exchanges.⁷¹

In 1982 I gathered some friends to launch US-USSR Bridges for Peace, one of the pioneer organizations in creating that citizen diplomacy movement.⁷² No small part of the inspiration for that effort derived from my studies with Eugen and my work with him on earlier peace-building projects.⁷³ In 1991, nine years after we started "Bridges," the Cold War was over—and I believe that our dialogue with our Russian counterparts played some role in its ending.⁷⁴

The Vladimir Solovyov Society

Now I wanted to tell you that history of “Bridges” partly to provide a real-life example of the kind of project a peace-oriented sociology would nourish. Those of us involved in that project were going across borders “like pirates,” as Eugen urged we do.⁷⁵ But I also wanted to explain how, over almost a decade, I met hundreds of Russians who wanted to revive their spiritual tradition—as soon as it would be legal to do so. When it finally *was* legal, in 1991, I invited several American scholars and several Russian scholars to join me in refounding The Vladimir Solovyov Society, a group which Berdyaev and Bulgakov, along with like-minded friends, had originally founded in 1905.⁷⁶

Soon our society began an annual series of international conferences on the revival of Russia’s spiritual life.⁷⁷ And, just as soon, I learned that Russia had produced a counterpart to Eugen in a literary scholar named Mikhail Bakhtin (1895-1975). Both thinkers saw language as the sea in which we swim, not as some handy tool to express ideas. Eugen’s work, as well as Bakhtin’s, was thoroughly discussed at our conferences.⁷⁸ Since Eugen was a great admirer of Solovyov and of Russian spirituality, that did not seem a stretch.⁷⁹

In 1993 Russian friends of mine translated and published in Moscow a little book I had written under the title *Between East and West: Rediscovering the Gifts of the Russian Spirit*.⁸⁰ A significant part of it described how Berdyaev and Solovyov had helped prepare the way for such thinkers as Bakhtin and Eugen.⁸¹ In 1994 Russians interested in Eugen translated and published *Speech and Reality*, while in 2002 their translation of *Out of Revolution* went on sale in Moscow.⁸² That history book’s publisher was St. Andrew’s Biblical Theological College, a Moscow organization that currently holds regular conferences on such thinkers as Bulgakov and Berdyaev.⁸³

All told, Eugen and his friend Berdyaev created quite a stir as Russia went about the task of recovering her past.

The New Paradigm

I’ll conclude by recalling that 1961 meeting in Berlin where Harvey Cox learned that the participants picked Tillich, Bonhoeffer, and Rosenstock-Huussy as the three Christian thinkers whose work would still be important in the third millennium. Now that we’ve arrived there, it’s clear that Tillich and Bonhoeffer are still on the radar. My main purpose in this paper was to

suggest that the much-less-noticed Rosenstock-Huessy belongs in their company.

I've also portrayed Berdyaev as similarly important. When Bishop Robinson focused on Berdyaev's expression "God is like a whole humanity" and said that "Berdyaev, in fact, probably comes as near as anyone to the theological synthesis we are seeking," he was saying, quite clearly, that my neglected mentor belongs in the vanguard of those working to introduce panentheism in our time. I find it heartening to recognize that Eastern Christians have not lagged behind their Western brethren in this movement toward the new paradigm.

NOTE: On the next page is the diagram of Rosenstock-Huessy's Cross of Reality which I promised to provide at the end of this paper. The reader will note that this diagram includes several subjects that could not be covered in the paper. I show them here to tempt you to find out more about them by reading Speech and Reality. [I still need to provide more suitable art for the cross design, now suggested only by keyboard symbols.]

