

I
Rosenstock-Huessy, the Galileo of the
Human, Social Sciences
by
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Based on a paper by James Eric Lane presented at the Rosenstock-Huessy Roundtable conference on July 6, 2006, in Norwich, Vermont, "Why Rosenstock-Huessy's Speech and Reality Is Important". (<http://erhpaperdownloads.blogspot.com/>).

Rosenstock-Huessy calls for three sciences, not natural science exclusively. Here are the three basic, fundamental assumptions upon which these three sciences are built:

1. Theological Science: The discernment of the holy—proposed by Robert Pollard expanding on Rosenstock-Huessy's proposal based only on the crucifixion in Christianity.

2. Natural science (Galileo): The intuition of space.

3. Human, sociological sciences (ERH): The experience of peace. As Eric Lane expresses it, Rosenstock-Huessy's *Speech and Reality* "is to sociology what Galileo's *Discourse on Two New Sciences* is to modern mathematical physics because both books transform philosophy, natural in the case of Galileo and social in the case of Rosenstock-Huessy, into a positive science".

Lane says, "Galileo's discovery of scientific reasoning was one of humanity's greatest achievements". In my view, 350 years of Galilean natural science with all of the marvels it has brought forth is only the first step. To me, Rosenstock-Huessy is the Galileo of the human sciences. As the powers of the human intellect open incredible new doors in the human story, we move into Rosenstock-Huessy's new millennium. The love that empowers all reality will create a new humanity beyond our fondest dreams.

With regard to Rosenstock-Huessy's proposal for theological science, I often say we have Christ in an ecclesiastical ghetto, when in fact Christ has a total love about him that pours out for all mankind of every tradition or lack of tradition. One thing I see about Rosenstock-Huessy that draws me powerfully to

him is that he brings Christ forward into the center of the human arena. Remember Martin Marty's comment in answer to Susannah Heschel's question following Marty's lecture at Dartmouth (July 2009). Marty said about Rosenstock-Huessy, "A new Christianity is emerging in him". But such major changes in our sense of things take generations to take effect.

Rosenstock-Huessy calls for three sciences in *Speech and Reality*, instead of just one. I want to propose a correction to his proposals for theological science, which to my surprise is expressed by him in solely Christian terms in that book. I believe that my suggestions bring it into much closer alignment with the largeness and openness of spirit that is his. Rosenstock-Huessy calls these the basic assumptions of the natural and human sciences: the intuition of space and the experience of peace. I propose that the basic assumption for theological science be: the discernment of the holy. That includes every holy tradition in the human story. I do believe Christ to be the definitive human being, but we must let the long term history of humanity support or undermine that. We must accept the validities of the many facets of the spiritual growth of humanity. Rosenstock-Huessy says, "I respond, even though I shall be changed". To me this seems entirely consistent with his open spirit, and I am very surprised he did not put it in such terms himself in that book. He has the most inclusive and hopeful overall view of the human story that I am aware of.

II

The New Christian Paradigm

This is where I get on my soap-box and into my pulpit. I see ERH as the most significant Christian prophet of the 20th century. He, with such as Marcus Borg, John Shelby Spong, and I hope many others, are leading us to "the new Christian paradigm". The age of a newly this-worldly Christianity, propelled by the all-powerful love that poured into the world through the life of Jesus, is leading us to the new millennium, the truly human age, the age of the spirit (Spirit), the age Rosenstock-Huessy calls us to. How? Partly by seeing that great love as the indwelling foundation of all that we do as human beings. Priests and ordinations are justified because life is priestly in its very foundation. We have yet to see clearly enough that all our legitimate occupations and human commitments are indeed the self-sacrifice, the self-giving, the loving that will propel humanity to glories beyond our present imaginings.

When I talked with Prof. Martin Marty at the reception following his lecture at Dartmouth College, he said our baptism is really an ordination into ministry. I was astounded, because he used even some of the same wording I used in the preface to my *Power, Love, and Christian Discipleship*, printed in 2007. So I print that quote of mine:

“In a sense our baptism is a form of ordination in that we are all baptized for lives of ministry in the world, a priesthood of all believers. We are called to live lives of sacrifice in the sense that our self-giving, our loving is paradoxically the avenue of our own fulfillment, of being given our own true selves by God, by life, by reality”.

Prof. Martin Marty’s lecture on Rosenstock-Huessy at Dartmouth (July 11, 2009) was entitled "The Public Professions and the Professions of the Public." In the Q. and A. period, Prof. Susannah Heschel asked this question (she being the daughter of Abraham Heschel and professor of Jewish Studies at Dartmouth): How basic was Christianity to Rosenstock-Huessy’s thinking? Marty’s answer: “A new version of Christianity is emerging in him.”

We are talking about "the new Christian paradigm," a more this-worldly Christianity of the Christ-love applied to the whole human story, not just the ecclesiastical and/or spiritual dimensions. We are talking about a new axial age, a new age of the spirit, Rosenstock-Huessy’s new millennium. His insights about life and society are basic to our perception of our reality, far more than just of the "spiritual" dimensions of who we are. I hope Marty was not over expressing his thinking on this. It certainly connected with me.

III

An Autobiographical Note

I have been an Episcopal priest for over 53 years. Along the way I took an interlude of 8 years as a stockbroker. That was in part a response to my belief in the worker priest idea, in the conviction that Christianity has for 2000 years been too otherworldly in our understanding of the implications of the Incarnation, in the conviction that yes we have to let go, but the letting go is only to lead us by the

Spirit into taking hold. I see us as here to take hold in every sphere of society by that holy love at the core of all being. The Buddhist detachment is only half of the story. Medieval otherworldliness is in some ways parallel to that detachment. Every legitimate human enterprise is a place for us to take hold, in the paradox that we die to self to be born to self. We let go so as truly to take hold, and truly become who we are.

Martin Luther was right. If there is anything priestly about life we are here to be part of the priesthood of all believers. Simone Weil (Paris, died 1943) regarded it as her Christian vocation to remain unbaptized until the Church (Roman) gained more of a real appreciation and love for the world.

My question: Are these otherworldlinesses merely a response to the very sorry state the world is in, without seeing the other side of the paradox of life? In other words, are we so blinded by the realities of evil that we basically opt out when we should be looking for the ways to opt in? The world is holy beyond and in spite of "the fall."

Back to Luther, and to Paul: It is not a real option for us to think that at 10 a.m. tomorrow we can all be as pure as the driven snow. Monasticism is not a real answer, perhaps a pointer. The world operates by justification by faith. If we have to be perfect to be the recipient of God and God's love, we have no hope. We must simply do what we can and leave it in God's hand. The opposite of sin is not virtue, it is faith.

If we take the world seriously, we need justification by faith, since it is not even a live option for us simply to do the right thing. As a stockbroker I came to see it this way, and I think this is somewhat parallel to the situation in every occupation. A stockbroker has at least a triple loyalty: to himself and his family, to his employer, and to his clients. These loyalties conflict. He has to take home a paycheck no matter what the state of the markets and the economy and of his clients' needs. There is no way he can serve all three loyalties perfectly. He is functioning in a fallen world whose societal structures are part of who he is, reflections of who we are as the human race. You do what you can, and trust that the incredible love is there for you no matter what.