

*Lise van der Molen*

**Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy**

**A frame-story of his life in which we participate<sup>1</sup>**

Prologue

“Tell me, Muse, of the man, much turned around.” These are the first words of Homer’s *Odyssey*. It’s followed by the words: who very much roamed about after he had sacked the holy citadel of Troy. ‘Much turned around’ can also be translated by ‘clever’.

At the beginning of Homer’s *Odyssey* the muse is invoked. In other old writings even the gods are invoked. It’s an indication that long ago a lively notion moved man’s spirit to tell a story. Telling a story is an art which is more than transmitting knowledge. It is unique. Men of old were fully alive to our inability to tell our story in case without help from heaven.

It’s the way of the right-minded narrator of the life of the saints and heroes. It’s the way of everyone who has to mention a beloved one who has passed away. We have to recognize or acknowledge our inability as soon as we try to do justice to one single human being.

Yet we have to open our mouth. As Eugen once remarked: “The death we bemoan is opening our mouth.”

At the celebration of the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy we have to speak!! We have to mention this ‘much turned around man.’ We will do so with humility. We can only hope for a “lucky hit.”

The stress will be on the turnings in ERH’s life! The much turned around man is one who is prepared to have many profound encounters in one’s life. Real encounters are made by those who are prepared to be changed people afterwards. Let us be fully alive to the fact that our powers of willingness to be changed are limited. Yet at some level we have this ability. We’re rather crazy about an ‘interesting life.’ However, when Romans were wishing someone an ‘interesting life,’ they meant his downfall!

Frame I: His parental home:

On the 6<sup>th</sup> of July 1888 Eugen Rosenstock was born in Berlin (Eugen Moritz Friedrich). On that his father was 35 years old and his mother Paula 30. Both parents

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<sup>1</sup> Translation of “Een raamvertelling waarin wij participeren” in *Jahrbuch der Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy Gesellschaft* *stimmstein* 3, Talheimer Verlag, Mössingen Talheim 1990 p. 110 - 128 The title was chosen because the script was basic to the play on the Saturday evening before Pentecost 1988 in the Rosenstock-Huessy-huis, Haarlem when we celebrated the hundredth birthday of Eugen. In the same *stimmstein* you find Raymond Huessy’s report on the whole celebration.

had the same family-name: Rosenstock. Already three sisters preceeded Eugen: Hertha, Thea and Martha and after Eugen three other sisters followed: Käthe, Eva Charlotte and Ditha. The young boy Eugen was richly surrounded by sisters. This (household?) fact shaped him from the very beginning. It especially affected Eugen's choice of a profession. For his father Theodor wouldn't allow Eugen to follow straightaway the desire of his heart: to be an historian. That wouldn't do. He had to choose a profession so that could sustain his sisters, as well as himself, if and when needed. Therefore his profession had to be jurisprudence/law.

His parental home was a safe port. With a talkative mother, a reticent father and all those sisters, he was thriving. Soon he appears to be a boy full of fantasy, and, yes, a genius. In school he's always the youngest and the brightest. We invoke a few scenes from this early life. Eugen is about ten years old.

I. Eugen's room. There you find dictionaries and many notes scratched on paper; pewter soldiers; and many gifts.

1. Hundreds of pewter soldiers are his playmates. With them he replayed the wars in the Balkan between Greeks and Turks and in Cuba between the Spaniards and Americans. Look, there you have the Emperor Eugen I of Berganau, sitting and studying the newspapers in order to rewrite the chronicles of war.

2. About a year later he is making a hole in the wall in order to spy on his sisters. On this occasion he is soundly taken to task by his father.

3. Huge dictionaries are in his room: Friedrich Kluge's *Etymologisches Wörterbuch der Deutschen Sprache*, a gift on his birthday in 1902; Jakob Grimms *Deutsche Grammatik*, that Eugen bought for himself. Also books of Chesterton, Carlyle and Shakespeare are there. All over the place are small pieces of papers and cards with notes written on them. For Eugen is trying to make a dictionary of the 'old high German language.' It's a disaster for the charwoman who has to clean his room.

4. When he is 14 years old he comes out with a translation of the 6<sup>th</sup> book of Homer's *Odyssey* to honour his mother on her birthday. It's the 14<sup>th</sup> of February. At the end of 1903, at Christmas, he offers his parents an essay on *Notker of Sankt Gallen*. It has 45 pages and is on parchment. About the same time he offers an elder sister the translation of the Egyptian proverbs of Ptah-Hotep.

II. Father Theodor is a banker in Berlin. His is a small bank because he doesn't accept corruption. He doesn't have much conversation with his children. He is of the opinion that in

education only a good example is fruitful. When the children want to get something, they have to approach their mother. She will put in a good word for them with their father.

Here I present a conversation between father and son. In content this exception underscores the rule. It goes roughly as follows:

Father: At last the wood from Russia has arrived! Some extra money for expenses, but it was worthwhile. Anyway, now it's here.

Eugen: But father isn't that bribery?

Father: In reality it's the only way to get the order fulfilled!

Eugen: Yes, but doesn't that enhance dishonesty?

Father: What do you know? The labouring people have their own code of honour. With very few bribes, they 're doing the job.

Eugen: But it's still not correct, isn't it?

Father: Hold your tongue! Later you will understand.

III. A third scene may be recounted. It's about the change from one gymnasium/school to a different one.

Eugen went to KingWilhelms Gymnasium in the Tiergarten. That was a school for rich people and a third of the pupils were Jewish.

One day Eugen gave a speech in Latin at the gymnasium about Caesar's 15<sup>th</sup> of March (the Ides of March). Everybody is astonished.

But Eugen doesn't feel comfortable at this place. He talks with his mother. He tells her that it's altogether too easy in this school. He wants to quit.

Then there arises a conflict with a neighbouring school for common people. A small army of boys is formed to teach those boys a lesson. Who is going at the head of the troops? (WHAT IS THIS? The smallest clout: Eugen. WHAT DOES CLOUT MEAN?) The commander decides to take Eugen down a peg or two and begins to hit Eugen on the head with a bag full of books. Consequently he receives slight brain concussion. It is not a serious one. Nevertheless, Eugen takes advantage of this situation and connives with his mother alleging that anti-Semitism played a role in these events. This is dished up before father Theodor. In this way he is persuaded to accept the transfer of Eugen to Joachimstal Gymnasium.

Here he is the only indexed Jew! He will be badly dealt with by the sons of manufacturers and clergymen from the province Brandenburg. These boys were interns living at the school. Eugen was a day-student together with a few other ones. Discrimination was not a privilege of labourers, he later states. This was in 1901.

## FRAME II: Baptism as the culmination of his Christian nature.

From his youngest days on Eugen is delighted and amazed by being able to speak. Already in his 14<sup>th</sup> year it's dawning to him that it is speech that is making human society and that therefore we should have the ability to unravel the mysteries of social life on the basis of speech. The study of language and research on language/speech becomes his deep passion during the time he is studying at the university. Alongside the study of speech/language, he is also studying for his legal profession in jurisprudence. He loves charters and old manuscripts.

From childhood on he has also had the feeling of being a Christian. Everything around him breathed a Christian spirit. At home, the Christian holidays were celebrated, especially Christmas day. But one thing was missing: they didn't go to church on Sunday. Paula had taken care that Eugen would not be circumcised! At Joachimstal Gymnasium he received religious instruction. And he sang in the choir of Kowarau (WHAT'S KAWARAU?). His heart is still laughing, he later recounts, when he is thinking back to that time.

From Easter 1906 till the end of 1909 he is a student at the universities of Zürich, Berlin and Heidelberg. In 1909 he defends the first part of a study called *Landfriedensgerichte und Provinzialversammlungen vom neunten bis zwölften Jahrhundert* (Jurisdiction on the truce of God and province meetings of 900 - 1200), which is published in 1910 as *Herzogsgewalt und Friedensschutz* (dominion of the duke and protection of peace). For this work he receives the title of a Doctor of Jurisprudence.

At the end of the first semester in Zürich, when he is 17 years old, he is very lonely. During this time he comes down with appendicitis. He goes to the hospital and has an operation to remove his appendix. That summer a sister and his mother come to take care of him, even an uncle from Vienna, Dr. Waldstein, visits. Dr. Waldstein had a conversation with Theodor Herzl just before he died. Dr. Waldstein later reported that conversation with Herzl to Eugen shortly before he died in 1914. But now, together with an aunt who had accepted the Christian faith, Dr. Waldstein, also a convinced Christian, urges Eugen to clarify his convictions and to come out as a Christian. So when he is back in Berlin for his recovery Eugen decides to be baptized. It happens in the fall of 1906. His godparents are a classmate and the mother of that classmate. These two are the only witnesses in church when Eugen is baptized. The clergyman preached about a biblical text without understanding what it meant. Eugen himself had chosen this text. It's from an early biblical manuscript which has an addition to the text in Luke 62, in which is told the story of the disciples of Jesus plucking the

ears of corn on the Sabbath. This addition is the point! From this text emerged Eugen's understanding of the law as the fruit of grace and as the delivery out of need and evil. Many times afterwards he will refer to this story. The text says: "On the same day he (Jesus) saw in amazement a man on Sabbath working in the field and he said to him: man, when you know what you're doing, you are blessed, but when you do not know, you are cursed and a transgressor of the law."

It was barren and chilly in that church and it didn't impress Eugen at all, except that he discovered that at that hour something had been repaired. This he realised on the occasion of his later 'baptism with the spirit' in 1918. That was after the Great War when he realized that the church, state, and university had failed in their responsibilities to keep the peace. His earlier baptism with water in 1906, he experienced as an open and somewhat late confirmation of his early Christian environment.

With the same naïve conviction he had entered the university. He had seen this institution as the highest fruit of the Christian faith, as the unique 'vessel of the Holy Spirit.'" It had indeed been a severe disappointment when he didn't find confirmation or even recognition of his view of the university in the circle of the professors, who were pretending to represent the university. While studying in Heidelberg and in darkest distress he twice visited a catholic priest.

### FRAME III. Nightly Conversation, the 7<sup>th</sup> of July 1913.

Before the outbreak of the great World War the nightly conversation of the 7<sup>th</sup> of July, 1913 occurs. It's between three of the four friends who have been meeting regularly since 1910 in the Baden-Baden group. Hans Ehrenberg, Rudolf Ehrenberg and Franz Rosenzweig are cousins. The group had their philosophical debating club evenings at Baden-Baden. In this, I think, mainly Jewish circle Eugen had met them. But the Baden-Baden conferences had dried up. And in the meantime Franz Rosenzweig, who was one of the eldest and struggling in his studies, had moved to Leipzig in order to visit the lectures in constitutional law/ history of law of his friend and Privat-Dozent Eugen Rosenstock.

All four are of Jewish origin. But Hans had come to his baptism much earlier. Rudi had been baptized when he was a child. But for Franz Jewish emancipation hadn't gone so far. His family, however, was totally alienated from the Jewish religion. In truth even the elderly home of Franz didn't practise its religion. But he had an uncle who did!

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2 Luke 6 : 5 according to Codex D (Bezae)

On this evening of the 7<sup>th</sup> of July – it's the day after Eugen's birthday – three of the friends are together in the home of Professor Victor Ehrenberg, the father of Rudi. Hans isn't present. (Afterwards Franz's correspondence on the occasion is mainly with Rudolf, and much later with Margrit and Eugen, but not with Hans.)

In their talks this night the central question is: what is the value of thinking and philosophy? What do they offer to their own epoch? The crucial question is: has a human being his last foothold in his ideas? And is he able to save himself and the public social system with these ideas? In the conversation the whole history of philosophy and of literature came up for review. Franz is even championing the opinion that religions are based on ideas. You are allowed to use these ideas in a random and arbitrary way. It is a relativist position, indeed, an ultimate relativism!

On the evening of the 7<sup>th</sup> of July 1913 Selma Lagerlöf's novel *The Miracles of the AntiChrist* is the center of the discussion. (Selma Lagerlöf was a Swedish novelist and had received the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1909). The end of the book is turned to the light again and again.

The statue of Christ in a church on Sicily has been imitated in its very image: capitalism and communism have ideologies which are within an ace of the systematic thinking of the church. The image of the Anti-Christ is wearing on his crown the proverb: "My kingdom is of this world."

At the end of the novel there is a conversation between God and an old pope. The pope has been sent to the earth to explore and report on the human situation. His message is: "one half is laughing, the other half is weeping." "Then the world is finished", says God. "And it will stay this way," says the old pope. "Nobody can deliver the people from its suffering, but he will be forgiven manifold who has encouraged others to bear their sufferings." And the novel ends.

Such are the circumstances before the World War: everything is full of faith and doubt.

On this evening Franz is called away (???) from his rationalistic doubts by Eugen. A stalemate position between eternal good and eternal evil is impossible. The book Genesis has kept an awareness of that in every Jew.

On this evening Eugen brings home to Franz that he doesn't believe a word of what he is asserting. All his considerations don't have a single firm truth of life. Being at an end Franz is asking: but what would you do, when you didn't know anymore where to turn? Desperate, Eugen is shouting: "Ja, da rufe ich eben den Herrgott an und laufe in eine Kirche und

versuche zu beten!” (Well, in that case I just call upon the Lord God and I walk into a church and try to pray.)

Franz is defeated. Here he’s encountering religion that is alive, and alive in an intellectual man. He is so defeated that he wants to die, to commit suicide as he later confesses in a letter to Gritli, Eugen’s wife.

Franz’s first impulse is to think that he has to become a Christian. But that changes in the fall of that year when he is visiting the synagogue in Berlin on Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement). Here he has the feeling that the old Jewish religion is still alive and I’ve found my way back to it. He makes his decision: Ich bleibe Jude! (I will stay Jewish!)

But it’s from this 7<sup>th</sup> of July that Franz dates his new spiritual existence. He rejects relativism/idealism and realizes his need to base his life in Revelation, to gain orientation or direction. And in every true or authentic orientation, the voice of God is heard.

#### FRAME IV: The War.

A few months before the outbreak of the world war, Eugen marries Margrit Huessy (Anna Margaretha, daughter of Paul Huessy and Klara Walti), a young Swiss woman from Säckingen, a student in the history of art. They met in Florence. Due to the outbreak of the war, their marriage ceremony of their marriage is on June 29<sup>th</sup> 1915. But the 24<sup>th</sup> of February 1914 is the day that they always celebrated as their day of marriage. This was the day they were united. They considered their fall for and into each other as their wedding sacrament and as in accordance with the doctrine of the church!

The war is going to do away with all the calcified states of things in Europe. They all will be cast into a melting crucible – this is Eugen’s conviction on the eve of the war. Will his own life be caught up in this crucible? Surely and how! In August he is made an army lieutenant and is sent off to the front. He will pass the war years in the trenches and on the battlefield at Verdun. In the army, which is under the orders of emergency in the midst of chaos, everything is turned upside down, it is totally different from any order of life. There are two pictures that Eugen/I (?) is/am conjuring up: one at the beginning of the war, the other at the end.

The first picture is of the hour of the birth of his new doctrine of speech, which he soon will find (1915, *Sankt Georgs Reden Or* (Speeches of St. George). The second is the moment of what he has named his ‘spiritual baptism’ and ‘re-birth.’ It’s the moment he received his ‘character indelibilis,’ his indelible character.

#### **Scene one:**

A packed platform in Berlin: a to and fro moving multitude of soldiers who say good-by. Eugen is on his way through from Leipzig on his way to the front. His father Theodor is on the look-out. All at once Eugen hears him calling on the top of his voice: EUGEN!

He hears his taciturn father going out of himself. He hears how he is the beloved son, the called one...

Scene two:

A calm platform in Wabern, near Stuttgart, the war is over, Germany has lost. The other states of Europe have lost this war also, but that isn't clear and in the open yet. It's the United States that has ended Germany's blind temper of expansion!

Eugen is arriving here together with Margrit and a Calvinist clergyman from Barmen. They have been travelling together. At this station they will part. But there is still some time. On their way they had talked about the all-inclusive turnover, the unimaginable crisis which has affected Europe. The pastor still doesn't quite understand what it means. On the platform Eugen mentions the three offers he has received.

First, there is the offer of the Minister of War, Breitscheid to become an undersecretary of state in order to draft the new constitution for the Weimar Republic. The pastor replies: "Accept it! It's a great opportunity and you can do enormously useful work for our common future!"

Then Eugen gives a glowing account of the progressive catholic periodical Hochland, that began in 1903. Carl Muth is the head editor and he has invited Eugen to share with him the editorship. The pastor says: "As a preacher I would think this is a still better offer."

Finally, Eugen tells them that there is a third offer from the University in Leipzig. It has kept open his professorial chair. He can come back. He will receive a royal salary of about 100.000 Reichs marks. It is awaiting him. The pastor's reply: "You're a married man. You do well to consider this offer seriously".

Then it's parting time.

Later Eugen writes: "Then it became clear to me that by accepting any one of these offers I would become a parasite on Germany's defeat. The country was heading towards defeat, disrepute, poverty and I would get on top of this corpse." All three are refuted and he goes to work in an automotive plant.

FRAME V: Daimler Benz.

In the factory producing motorcars, life goes on after the downfall of states. This is the mute, still inarticulate place where the global spanning industry and business turns up. It's here that Eugen tries to regain his voice. As a subordinate of Dr. Eng.(?) Paul Riebensahm, Eugen is founding the first '*Werkzeitung*' or (Labour-paper) in Germany. Labourers and employers are drawn into conversation on the topic of how to order industrial labour. For himself he saw this work as: '*Paying the piper for the fact that he had been a German officer.*'

And it was also an opportunity to sleep to get his sanity back after the exhaustions of war. He didn't have any final responsibility here. The situation is neatly sketched in this image: It's early in the morning and Eugen, 31 years of age, is letting out the dog of Mrs. Riebensahm.

#### FRAME VI: The "Labour-Academy" in Frankfurt am Main.

At an intercession of Dr. Riebensahm, Eugen Rosenstock becomes the first leader of this Academy. He will shape its form. It's the result of the new relations within the Weimar Republic. Because in 1919 employers and the trades-union promise each other to cooperate. They found their "Arbeitsgemeinschaft" (work-community). Together they have become the new bearers of the new constitution. "Arbeitsgemeinschaft" is the first political word; it's the very concept of the new constitution!

The new academy is providing the cadre-training ground for industrial life in the new state. The labour movement, the state and the university accept the obligation to find a new constellation. In this constellation the representatives of the labour-movement form the new element. This was to renew the educational system. Education in the new academy is coined by the input of the experience of the 'workers of the floor,' the employed ones. The labourers will get the opportunity of feed back! The professors, hailing from a former era, will not be assumed to have all the knowledge. They will not instruct the existing forms of the state, they will be partners in the search of new ways. Therefore the curriculum has to be fluid. And teachers have to be responsible for the design by way of forum-discussions together with representatives of the workers. New for the teachers is that their teaching has to be preceded by some form of dialogue.

This form is tried out by Eugen in the first year. But his colleagues, Sturmfels, Schlunz and Ernst Michel have difficulties in understanding this new initiative. Moreover, the first

instigator, the socialist Hugo Sinzheimer, is completely thinking in pre-war terms. His intention is to have an academy for labourers.

In Eugen's experience, the birth of this academy is the result of the meeting of the powers of his own faith and the spirit of the age in the Weimar Republic. He is the mother and the spirit of the age is the father. It means to him that as soon as the institute is established he has to disappear himself. As soon as possible he has to make himself superfluous. All his new reserves, he feels, have been consumed in this year. Taking sides against Sinzheimer has been the real push for Eugen to leave. When he does, his successors recognise what they have done and what nevertheless has been brought about.<sup>3</sup> Ernst Michel is the next leader. He will try to execute the acquisitions.

Scene of play:

In 1921 the Spartacus-strike is on. All light is falling out of the new Republic. Eugen has pointed out that this is the mentality of this epoch. People are dwelling in semi-darkness. Every participant in the conversation is receiving back his own human face. It's the situation of private conversation, in which everyone comes to the recognition that he needs help. This has to be the starting point of a new formation. Now is the emergence of the building of the bridge between private and public.

Sinzheimer, Sturmfels (socialist), Schlunz (communist) and Michel have before their eyes the pamphlet "*Das Gespräch vor Zeugen*" (1919) (The Conversation before Witnesses). Its content contains this summons: "Forge professors, teachers, pastors, politicians together in groups of two or three at a table and let them wrestle over the truth in the full liberty of private conversation, but also in the full responsibility of being understandable before a listening public, and you will have the contrary of what you have in today's lectures, today's discussions, entertainments at the tables of the regular customers and in the tram. Serious consideration, aloud and public anticipation is needed; a secret confidential way of talking equipped with all the charms of humanity but still entering publically before the whole world and therefore drawing its circles into unprejudiced and unlimited life. Not result, thesis, pugnacity of 'coined egg-heads with bookish convictions' will such a conversation transmit, but the birth of truth, the transmission of separate worlds of thought in the centre of personal

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<sup>3</sup> The event was accompanied by a break-down, a deep personal crisis. The heartrending report is found in **Ferien 1921**. Zur Heimkehr am 25. Oktober 1921 in die Riviera di Francoforte. (21 pp.) What he is mentioning in *The Christian Future* 1946 (1966) p. 102 (*Des Christen Zukunft* Siebenstern Taschenbuch 1955 S. 126) refers to this event. Two times Dr. Georg Müller is offering a presumable date: 1925 and 1911 (he uses the word 'Vermutung' twice) in *Mitteilungen der Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy-Gesellschaft*, 1971 15. Folge S. 9 and 1973 18. Folge S. 15. Both are wrong, the second even more wrong than the first. Müller didn't know this report, which Harold Stahmer gave me.

behaviour. On us would descend the truth as an experience of life's presence, nowhere anymore would it squat like a completed book."

Sinzheimer as a socialist is still wanting an 'academy of workers' aiming at the awakening of the workers' consciousness in order to take over the capital. Sturmfels wants to maintain the intellectual elite, the peculiarity of what the academy always has been. The tradition has to be preserved. Schlunz isn't able to discern, how you will be able to account all-round for the streams of finances coming from the trade-union, the state and the university. The only answer/way out is in Michel's view: try once more to execute the experiment of Eugen.

## FRAME VII: Depopulated Religion.

After the Labour Academy, Eugen is unemployed for a year, from the middle of 1922 untill the middle of 1923. At that time their son Hans, born in 1921, is a one year old. To stay alive Eugen's huge library is put up for auction. The money is soon gone, for the huge decrease in the value of the money has started. There is no way out except to get a new professorship. He can get it in Breslau. In this farthest corner of the Republic, Eugen will accept the post... "It was like descending into the grave, worse than emigration later on," he writes. From 1923 till 1933 he is teaching constitutional law, labour law and sociology at Breslau. In his first year he meets Joseph Wittig, who is teaching patrology at the Department of Theology. They immediately feel an affinity of souls.

The catholic priest Joseph Wittig is a scholar who is writing from the vital roots of the church, not merely about them. He knows that scholastic theology has a pastoral origin and bed, which has been forgotten and lost. Therefore timidity has taken over in the hearts of the believers which isn't in accordance with the joyful spirit of victory of the first Christians is his conviction. In this spirit he is writing his article "*Die Erlösten*" (the Redeemed Ones). He is a good writer indeed. Everybody is understanding his words and being touched by them. Reconciliation and redemption is being experienced by catholic people, by Christians as they can lay claim on them as the fountains of life in their own time. You need not distrust any longer the good gifts of creation, nor your feelings of goodness.

A Swiss Jesuit is down on him like a flash, he sounds the alarm. "Luther redivivus" is his charge: Luther has returned to life in Joseph Wittig. Thus the bloodhounds of the Curia in Rome are roused. Archbishop Cardinal Adolph Bertram of Breslau receives a letter from Rome, in which alarm on Wittig' writing is expressed. Bertram is a weak bishop who soon will let him down. The atmosphere of those days is well represented in the memoires of Carl

Muth, who in 1954 published in the periodical *Hochland* that: even asking for an account of the indictment against you from Rome was interpreted as disobedience and infidelity towards Rome. This sort of slavishness was basically foreign to the carpenter's son from Silesia. He thought it also to be basically foreign to the spirit and doctrine of the church. Wittig never got an answer to his question: which passages in my work are really meant? Give me, please, chapter and line of what isn't in accordance with the catholic doctrine! It seems that Bertram simply didn't pass it on. Instead of an answer he received a demand point-blank: revoke your errors and swear anew the anti-modernist oath. Wittig refuses. He has already sworn the anti-modernist oath and never repudiated that oath. To revoke errors, he had to know what they were!

Next comes this arrogant act: Wittig is deposed as a professor and excommunicated as a priest. In his desolation he finds Bianca, for she comes to help him, to be with him. He marries her in 1926. This marriage will be later held against him by the church authorities and marked as obstacle for rehabilitation and readmission into the church. He was even urged to dissolve his marriage! The whole case, it was said, could tempt others to follow his example!!

Well, the smear campaign went so far, that the episcopate wanted to take away from him his claims to a pension. Please note this was a pension which was paid by the state. Thus his friend Eugen stepped into the breach and journeyed to Berlin to plead before the minister of culture for his subsistence.

Scene:

Eugen is walking in the corridor of the office of the minister in Berlin, awaiting his audience. On his walk he is, unknowingly, singing. He is seriously reproached: in the office of the ministry of religious affairs there is to be no singing!

The minister hears Eugen explaining: the Church has on the basis of the Concord with the state the right to depose professors in theology, but she has no right at all in regard to cases involving salary which she doesn't provide herself. He made crystal clear to the minister that he had to do. He argued that Wittig was a man of integrity who is being deprived not only of his reputation and of the fulfilment of his life's realisation, but who is threatened in his bare life's subsistence! The conclusion: the pension of the state will be maintained.

Eugen Rosenstock himself too had to endure threats from the Catholic sides. To plead for his friend was not allowed. And he shouldn't have published his pamphlet "Religio Depopulata." His regard among catholic people was also attacked. This was the reason that when Hitler came to power, he could only publish in *Hochland* under a pseudonym. His

articles against Nazism in *Hochland* in 1931 and 1932 bear the name: Ludwig Stahl. Theologians like Erich Przywara (1889-1972) never tired of making Eugen suspect in the eyes of the Catholic Church. It lasted till after World War II! Przywara is still regarded as a great Catholic theologian!

#### FRAME VIII: The work-camps (Arbeitslager).

In the neighbourhood of Kreisau (today Krzyzowa) are situated the districts Waldenburg, Landeshut and Neurode. The area had been depopulated by German industrialisation and abandoned to poverty. “As you know,” Horst von Einsiedel writes in a letter on the first work-camp, “Waldenburg is the most backward area of Europe.” The lacerating picture of the situation, in which the people who stayed behind weren’t able to get the vermin out of their homes. His letter ends with the words: “in short it’s the hell in Germany.”

Count Helmuth James von Moltke comes from Kreisau. He is 20 years of age. “He knows,” again in the words of Horst von Einsiedel, “to begin with the Emperor and Hindenburg and all the politicians of Europe (....). He is intelligent, philosophical, competent and really imposing.”

He is knocking on Eugen Rosenstock’s door, to have his advice in the question: what to do for this area and its unemployed people.

Now Eugen has mounted the breach in behalf of “Peace of the land” since 1912. It goes back to the medieval *Treuga Dei* or the truce of God. The knights of the Cross were assigned with a new duty: to bring peace among the tribes living in constant revenge. They had to be inventive to be successful. They didn’t have to abolish feuds and revenge, no they had to interrupt the continuity of revenge among tribes. During the days of the Passion week, from Holy Thursday till the Day of Easter, there has to be no fighting. This renewal they brought about. In this way the Christian week was introduced in Europe.

Ingenious initiatives are needed where life is threatened to be wrecked by self-destruction! It was the case once more with the entrance of industrialisation in Europe. Already in 1912 Werner Picht brought Eugen in contact with the English Settlement movement. The boundaries of the classes had a break-through in that movement by drinking tea together. Intellectuals invited labourers to their tea-table.

During the war, Eugen organised his first camps for soldiers. It concerned men on leave behind the front. In this way he freed them from going idle, from empty time.

Eugen knew of the speechlessness in industry among labourers as well as among engineers. At the factory of Daimler Benz he himself had encountered this situation. It was one that over the next decades he would return to time and again..

In these days he was also encountering the Youth Movement which was undergoing a new surge. In 1923 & 1924 Eugen's pamphlet "*Industrievolk*" or (People in Industry) was all the rage.

**Scene:** Conversation between Eugen and Helmuth.

Helmuth gives an outline of the situation in the districts around Kreisau. He refers to the proposals Eugen has made. He recognizes that with modern industry brings unemployment in its wake.

Imperative in this situation is that the capital of a man's powers of life needs to be saved and guarded. He needs more attention and more friends than the man who has his job. Otherwise he'll not get rid of the feeling of uselessness. Therefore there should be a force of volunteers to accompany the unemployed. Unemployment money should be used to bring it about.

Now Helmuth is coming up with the willingness of students to go in this direction. They talk about the requirements. (a.) The support of the government they need. The connection will have to be made with Heinrich Brüning, for he is the deputy to the Diet (Reichstag) for Middle-Silesia. (b.) There has to be an action for the recruitment of the students. This will not be easy, for in 1926, the economy is booming. (c.) The special organisation of the camp. It will not be merely a camp of doing things. The camp will not take away jobs of other people. Neither is it meant for professional training. One will shun the market. The camp will be a place where different traditions meet, seeking a new orientation for civil life. It's goal is spiritual: to find a new connection among people. (d.) The recruitment has to be in groups which represent different traditions: labourers, farmers and students. They represent respectively socialists, Catholics and Protestants. Every group is supposed to contribute its own valuable things.

In short: the goal is to find a counterweight of what is valuable in the long run (Langfristigkeit) over against the short run (Kurzfristigkeit) of the modern world.<sup>4</sup> The new order of life is in the first place in need of being acted on by its participants. Its main

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<sup>4</sup> In 1965 Rosenstock-Huussy finds a new word-pair in the title of his book *Dienst auf dem Planeten: Kurzweil und Langeweile im dritten Jahrtausend*: Kurzweil and Langeweile. The pun is not translatable: 'pastime' and 'boredom' would be a literal translation. Meant is that the third millennium will have the character of both: spilling of time and boredom, but at the bottom is the contradiction between the short and the long time-spans. The Dutch translation has a beautiful brain-wave. It has: 'long breath and short breath in the third millennium'.

characteristics are willingness to serve and voluntariness. The state cannot oblige anything. The camp has to have self-government. But it needs a rhythm of the day. The morning has to start with an encouraging reminder of the goal of the camp. After breakfast comes the work. The work of the first camp is work at a system for discharging water. In the afternoon, first the meal and afterwards an hour of rest. After that, discussion on a theme. In the evening, musical preparations for a feast on the weekend.

The camp will last three weeks. In the third week there is a meeting with representatives from state, church and concerns. It is called “Führerbegegnung,” or meeting with the leadership.

In the years of crisis after 1930 Eugen knocked on the door of the ‘Oberpräsident’ (upper-president) of Silesia to make a proposal on how to deal with unemployment. Many villas in Breslau were empty, without inhabitants. Eugen asked for 50 of them in order to allow a number of unemployed to live there together with 8 or 10 students in each of the houses. The cash-desk for unemployed would have to pay them all.

The Oberpräsident laughed at Eugen. He called this “one of the germs trampled down” in the struggle that really is tackling the problem of unemployment.

The labour conscription under Hitler has murdered the whole movement of the voluntary work-camps, which had spread like a wildfire from 1926 till 1929. It spread over 15 regions in Germany. After World War II they never recovered from the bad odour they got, even the word *Arbeitslager* didn’t recover.

*The problem of unemployment is not: a shortage of jobs. The problem is: how in an epoch reigned by technology no layers of the population will be excluded and be robbed of their right to have a voice in the community also.*

FRAME IX: Courage.

**What did it mean? What had to be done?** These were the great questions after the Great War, World-War I. Did it mean “the wedding of war and revolution?” Eugen’s book with that title (1920) didn’t find a real audience in Germany.

What had been done in the experiments in Frankfurt am Main, in Stuttgart, in the Hohenrodter Bund, in ‘The School for People’s Research and Adult Education’ (started in 1927), in the Work Camps failed or wasn’t able to halt and overcome the spiritual climate in Germany. The whole people was “living backward.” (See the article in *Die Kreatur* 1930 describing the experiences from 1918 till 1928) and after the Treaty of Versailles (1920, 1921). People were entering tribal times full of spirits of revenge. This was the climate of the

Weimar Republic. Hitler is called by Eugen “a sort of German pope” or “a man having the brains of someone living in Braunau am Inn before Carl V. abdicated in 1555, without any presence of mind who offered himself to be for people fearing to drown in the national misfortune, the Christophorus.”

Had it all been in vain? Had the ‘whole caravan of faith’ been without any fruit? In any case Eugen had done what he could. The marvellous book on the European Revolutions has its origin in this group. The Introduction of the new edition of that German book (1951) has his confession: he had done what should be done, but it was not enough: “God didn’t accept the sacrifices.”<sup>5</sup>

January 31, 1933 that man Hitler is elected Chancellor of the German empire. All theoretical thought and all the professions are subordinated to racial instincts. It’s the character of the so called Third Empire, Nazism. In the faculty room of the jurists Eugen expresses his protest.

Scene:

Eugen has for his colleagues his proposal: to call all legal departments (juristische Fakultäten) in Germany to strike. “For where there is no justice anymore, it is impossible to teach justice (the law).”

The colleagues have an hearty laugh at Eugen! Eugen is rising and speaks the memorable words: “Meine Herren, wir sehen uns nie wieder!” (My Lords, we never will see each other again.) And he leaves the room.

Later, in America, he recounts how these words came true. He never saw the face of any of these colleagues again.

In March Eugen goes to Berlin and at the ministry of foreign affairs makes application for leave which he gets. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of November he is off to the USA with the steamer called Deutschland. He will be a guest-professor at Harvard. In 1934 Margrit and Hans will follow. In 1935 they visit Germany in order to see what they have decided. It’s at the presentation of the edition of the Letters of Franz Rosenzweig. Eugen was the editor of their correspondence in 1916.<sup>6</sup> It is printed at the end of the book. Afterwards the immigration of the family into the USA was once for all, was the feeling they had.

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5 The article of Die Kreatur: Die rückwärts gelebte Zeit is also in: Die Sprache des Menschengeschlechts Bd. 2 S. 178 – 197. The remarks on Hitler see: Die Rasse der Denker in: Die Sprache des Menschengeschlechts Bd. 1 S. 612 – 654, quote from p. 635. Quote on the meaning of his Weimar time: Die Europäischen Revolutionen und der Charakter der Nationen 1951 S. V

6 Franz Rosenzweig / Briefe Unter Mitwirkung von Ernst Simon ausgewählt und herausgegeben von Edith Rosenzweig, Schocken Verlag, Berlin 1935. Eugen’s contribution pp. 637 – 720, Introduction p. 638f.

At Harvard University he occupies the Kuno Fischer chair for German Art and Culture, teaching German Studies (1934 - 1935). It was about the European Revolutions.

The American professor Carl Joachim Friedrich, (1901 – 1984, born in Leipzig) provided his appointment. A few years earlier, Eugen had initiated his appointment as guest-professor in Breslau.

#### FRAME X: Camp William James.

His stay at Harvard is only two years. The reason is that Eugen used to mention and even to invoke in his lectures the name of the living God. In the agnostic left winged university of Harvard this is felt as undesired. So some proposed that he be removed to the theological department. But there a loud protest was heard: they wanted to be known too as real scientific scholars. Eugen from his side didn't want to go there. Nevertheless there is a correspondence of Eugen with the theologian Prof. Dr. Emil Brunner to get the right papers for such an appointment. It didn't succeed... And so they found a way out that led to a professorship at Dartmouth College in Hanover, New Hampshire.

It's now the second time that he is selling his library. To the Baker Library at Dartmouth College. The profits are used to build a house in Norwich, Vermont. In 1938 the family is moving in. It's the bitter year his mother, Paula, under the threat of the concentration camps of Hitler, makes an end to her life! She refuted the condition on which she was welcome to come over to 'Four Wells': that she wouldn't interfere in the religious life of the family.

1938 till 1941 were the years of the great Richard Cabot Lectures in Cambridge and Dartmouth College, in which university reform - in reality the proposals of grounding a real American university for the first time, one for the Continent – was at stake. (Dr. Richard Cabot and the family Henry Copley and Rosalind Huidekoper Greene were life-long intimate friends of the family.) We have to understand that it's in this context that Camp William James was started. The work-camps in Germany had already been called "Universität in der Wüste" (university in the desert). Now the motto was: *Immigration without end*.

In the USA the Civilian Conservation Corps had been founded in behalf of the unemployed and one had tried to take as model the German "Arbeitsdienst" (work-service). But bureaucracy had come to prevail and one had made the fundamental fault of lodging in it merely unemployed people. Total isolation was the result.

#### Scene:

Look at what happened! The unemployed young men were so bored that they ambushed cars. At the pay out office the revolver was on the desk to prevent robbery of the

funds. An 'educational officer' – he was a reserve-officer in the army – relates that in a neighbouring camp money-gifts were offered to 50 young men in order that they might partake in round games on Saturday-evening and on Sunday. Most sad was what happened at the diner tables: stealing each others food from the plate.

Camp William James was ordered in the way the German work-camps of volunteers had functioned. So students were added to farmers and workers. The work was found in the depopulated area of Sharon, Vermont, where farmers couldn't uphold their living.

It was started by permission and assent of president Franklin Delano Roosevelt. It had the support of people like Dorothy Thompson. Soon, already in the second year of the camp World War II made it end.

## FRAME XI: World War II.

Even Eugen is obliged to do other things. He e.g. has to teach physics and chemistry, because bombs have to be made.

Scene:

A bomber is on the stage. Bob O'Brien is the pilot. He is flying Eugen all over the place to teach army officers. Americans are of the opinion that managers can do the job. But in war management fails.

In these lonely years Eugen is completing his studies in Egyptology, still working at and reordering his Sociology. The study of his speech-doctrines, his grammatical method is never ending.

## FRAME XII: The years after 1950.

It's only after 1950 that Eugen and his family were visiting Germany again. There were still old connections and in the field of industry soon there are new ties. In Bavaria, for example, he is assisted in the reconstruction by his leadership in the new work-camps and adult education.

He was a very respected speaker at many conferences of the WIPOG (Wirtschafts Politische Gesellschaft Society for Politics in Economy), where a new start was made in the ordering of industrial life.

At the same time he was present at the cradle of the aid in the development on the planet, in the third world. See his books *Planetary Service* (Dienst auf dem Planeten 1965)

and *Conditions of Peace in a World-Economy* (Friedensbedingungen einer Weltwirtschaft) and speeches from 1952 till 1963 published posthumously by Dr. Rudolf Hermeier 1988.

It was perhaps the most happy period of his life. At last many of his books were published in Germany. Among them the volumes on speech (his method) *Die Sprache des Menschengeschlechts* Bd. 1 & 2 1963 & 1964 (Humankind's Speech) and his second magnum opus: *Soziologie I Die Übermacht der Räume* 1952 and *Soziologie II Die Vollzahl der Zeiten* 1958. (The Domination of the Spaces and The Full Count of Times)<sup>7</sup>

### **Two scenes:**

1. Eugen as ambassador of a new economy in Germany. Let Germany be the example of a new economic order, which takes into account the life-time of each worker. Germany has therefore to stay an unarmed country, its existence guaranteed by the Soviet Union and the United States.
2. Georg Müller, Ernst Michel and Kurt Ballerstedt try to enable the repatriation of the Rosenstock-Huessy family to Germany. Eugen has this condition: the friends have to be successful in the German Government and that the men of the resistance who died, Helmuth James von Moltke and Dietrich Bonhoeffer, are recognised as the leading stars of the new constitution.

On the 4<sup>th</sup> of September 1959 Margrit dies and he had to bury his beloved one. He always was wooing her. They already had a long marriage and he was still courting her. At that time she said to him: "But don't you know that you gave me a spiritual rebirth?" She was 66 when she died. A whole year of mourning and great distress followed. "It's a tragedy," he wrote to his friend Georg Müller. After that year Freya von Moltke-Deichmann, the widow of Helmuth James, accepted the invitation to come over and live with him.

### **FRAME XIII Epilogue.**

Now what about the rest of all the stories around Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy? For instance, what about his notable and courageous acts? How at the front in World War I he saved the life of a deserter from court-martial and the death penalty by calling him before the troops and giving him a slap in the face. How he fought the corrupters of language at the

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<sup>7</sup> The new edition: Im Kreuz der Wirklichkeit Eine nach-goethische Soziologie Band 1 Die Übermacht der Räume, Band 2 Die Vollzahl der Zeiten 1, Band 3 Die Vollzahl der Zeiten 2, Talheimer Verlag Mössingen-Talheim 2008/2009.

universities and in the media. How he made long travels to South America and to Egypt to study the tribes and the empires in their original place. How he climbed the Canadian Alps and was skiing there with a group. During that trip they debated, for fun, the one decisive event for every year of the Christian era. How he was writing letters to friends and colleagues endlessly – ten on a day was not unusual, Freya said. And how he was composing poems all the time. How he was breeding and riding horses. Isn't it taken down in the chronicles of all who have loved him?

And he died. It was on the 24<sup>th</sup> of February 1973, on the day he and Margrit used to celebrate their wedding.

He commanded his spirit unto Him who is for all of us the Power of Speech.

Before he passed away sitting in his chair his face was radiating, shining like the sun.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Freya told me: "ich fragte ihm: weisst du was heute passiert? Sterben, sagte er." (I asked him: do you know what happens today? Dying, he said. He had asked his people around: "Hilf mir, meinen Tod zu überwinden." (Help me to conquer my death.) When she told me about his shining face, she asked: "Hast du je so etwas erlebt?" (Did you ever have such an experience?) I said I didn't, but that I had heard that it occurs.