Stasis and Eruption:

Apocalyptic in the Thought of Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy

Peter J. Leithart

In modern theology, "apocalyptic" is used of a literary genre characterized by a narrative framework, angelic messengers, and secret revelations. Apocalyptic revelations disclose "a transcendent reality which is both temporal, insofar as it envisages eschatological salvation, and spatial insofar as it involves another, supernatural world" (Collins 1998: 5). The message is often an eschatological one, the announcement of the world's end, and apocalyptic writings and their associated hopes have often given rise to social movements dedicated to anticipating, speeding, or realizing the promised end (cf. Cohn 1970).

Since the apocalypse of World War I, the scope of apocalyptic in theology has broadened, as "young, brilliant, brash, and no doubt highly ambitious" theologians began to brandish their "exceedingly paradoxical" apocalyptic theologies to purge the ills of modern culture and theology (Davis and Harinck 2012: 3). In theologians like Barth and Bultmann, apocalypse was more than a genre, and had little to do with myths about the end of the physical universe. In Ernst Kasemann's phrase, it was "the mother of all Christian theology" (quoted in Collins 1998: 1). Apocalyptic has proven particularly useful for radical theologians, who, following the lead of Kierkegaard, are dedicated to upsetting the easy accommodations of liberal theology. "Developing the critique of bourgeois, liberal religion in Nietzsche, Kierkegaard, and Overbeck, they transformed the Protestant rejection of the *theologia gloriae* into a virtual mysticism, profoundly resistant to every positive objectification of God" (Davis and Harinck 2012: 3). Apocalyptic theology is today enjoying a renaissance, and for some of the same

reasons. Apocalyptic disturbs settled opinion, resists fixities in all forms, demands existential response. The searing rhetoric of apocalyptic is ideally suited to a summons to the slumbering: "Wake up!"

Apocalyptic is no longer confined to the theologians. As Derrida said with characteristic playfulness, there is a "newly arisen apocalyptic tone in philosophy" (Derrida 1993). "The global capitalist system is approaching an apocalyptic zero-point," writes the anti-theologian Slavoj Zizek at the beginning of his *Living in the End Times* (2010: x). Four horsemen stalk the plains: "ecological crisis, the consequences of the biogenetic revolution, imbalances within the system itself . . . and the explosive growth of social divisions and exclusions" (Zizek 2010: x). Zizek means something analogous to the traditional understanding of apocalypse: Dreadful doom hangs over the world, and, as we shall see below, Zizek proposes an apocalyptically-infused response to the apocalypse.

In a different vein, Alain Badiou makes the quasi-apocalyptic "Event" the center of his philosophy. In a lecture, Badiou traces the sickness of contemporary philosophy, whether in its hermeneutic (Hedegger, Gadamer), its analytic (Wittgenstein and disciples), or its postmodern (you know who) guises, to two common flaws: all assume the end of metaphysics, which means the end of truth, and all assume that language is "the crucial site of thought." Badiou finds both of these assumptions disastrous. Philosophy is dead unless it can "establish itself beyond the multiplicity of language games" (Depoortere 2009). Unless philosophy can affirm Truth, it has no way to stand against "the monetary uniformity imposed on us by global capitalism."

Truth cannot, however, be a traditionally transcendent truth communicated by revelation, nor the foundational certainties of Cartesian modernity, nor the result of rigorous Kantian reasoning. Faith in truth cannot assume any unity in the universe. Instead, true philosophy must risk adhering to a "fixed point within discourse, a point

of interruption," an event to which one remains absolutely loyal. Hence Badiou's interest in Paul, whom he considers "a poet-thinker of the event." Badiou (2003) has no interest or belief in the specifics of the gospel Paul preaches, but only in the formal structure of a Paul who announces a great event that defines truth in terms of faithfulness to the Event. Paul's letters "are in no way . . . narratives, in the manner of the Gospels, or theoretical treatises, of the kind later by the Church Fathers, or the lyrical prophecies, such as the Apocalypse attributed John." No, "they are *interventions.*" Paul "propounds a speech of rupture, and writing ensues when necessary" (Badiou 2003: 31).

Paul is the *anti*-philosopher, who resists every attempt to confine the gospel events into a system, most especially every attempt to manipulate the gospel to make it a form of Greek "wisdom" that draws its conclusions from the order of the cosmos, the way things always are. Nor can Paul be bundled together with the Jews, for whom signs play the role that wisdom plays in Greek philosophy. Jewish "discourse" is the discourse of the exception, "because the prophetic sign, the miracle, election, designate transcendence as that which lies behind the natural totality" (Badiou 2003: 41). Neither wisdom nor signs define Paul's discourse. Following Paul's lead, one cannot start from the Whole or from the Exception; one can be neither Greek nor Jew but "must proceed from the event as such," which Badiou describes as "a-cosmic and illegal, refusing integration into any totality and signaling nothing" (Badiou 2003: 4). For Paul, one event-complex, the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus is the touchstone of everything for Paul, the touchstone of "physics" and "ethics."

Badiou clarifies by distinguishing between discourses of the Father from those of the Son. Paternal discourses "bind communities in a form of obedience (to the Cosmos, the Empire, God, or the Law)." One (Greek) is a universalizing discourse of the Father; the other (Jewish) is a particular discourse of the Father. What is needed for what Badiou identifies as a true universal is a "discourse of the Son" (Badiou 2003: 42), a

discourse that is "absolutely *new*," a discourse of rupture, mimicking God's sending of the Son that that constitutes and "signifies primarily an intervention within History." Through this intervention, Nietzsche says, history is "'broken in two,' rather than governed by a transcendental reckoning in conformity the laws of an epoch. The sending (birth) of the son names this rupture. That it is the son, not the father, who is exemplary, enjoins us not to put our trust any longer in any discourse laying claim to the form of mastery" (Badiou 2003: 43). Badiou's Event is a permanent apocalypse: "Christ is *a coming*; he is what interrupts the previous regime of discourses, Christ is, in himself and for himself, *what happens to us*" (48).

Badiou's own Damascus Road is less transcendent than Paul's: It is the revolt of May 1968. A philosophy loyal to the event is characterized by revolt, logic, universality, and risk – all the features of genuine philosophy. May 1968 fits into the slot occupied by Christ's death and resurrection in Paul's theology. May 1968 is the event to which Badiou declares his loyalty, the eruption that paradoxically gives stability and direction to life.

Badiou's apocalyptic philosophy has affinities with Derrida and Walter Benjamin. Derrida reflects that the apocalyptic command to "Come," which calls the event that is yet to come, cannot be encompassed with any logic, including the "onto-theo-eschatology" of the event. Derrida has himself been read as an apocalyptic philosopher, and he admits that apocalyptic discourse has the capacity to elude censors and to "dismantle the dominant contract or concordat" (160). Yet the apocalyptic does not disclose an actual end. Were the advent to arrive, it would mean a closure that would violate apocalyptic discourse itself. What apocalypse finally reveals, he suggests, is the demystification of apocalyptic itself. What is announced is "an apocalypse without apocalypse, an apocalypse without vision, without truth, without revelation" (Derrida 1993: 167). Likewise, despite Benjamin's debt to Kabbalic sources, he has no interest in their interpretive practices or their texts. What he takes from Kabbalah is the

sheerly formal reality of the "lightning flash" of a messianic moment, which has the advantage of disrupting and subverting all pretenses of utopia (O'Regan 2009: 61-68).

For Badiou and the rest, though, the Event is only identifiable as such against the background of non-eventful reality. Events disrupt fixity, permanence, stability, stasis. Eruptions bubble up from a smooth and placid surface. But if all is multiplicity all the way down, how does one account for that fixity, or even the appearance of fixity? If all is multiplicity, so that it is really impossible to speak of "all" at all, it would seem that all is also event. But if that is the case, the Event cannot stand free of its context to compel adherence and loyalty. There is also the problem of judgment. After all, Heidegger (for some time at least) considered Hitler an *Ereignis* in very much the sense that Badiou means. More practically, or aesthetically, the spectacle of a now-elderly French academic (Badiou was born in 1937) adhering gamely to 1968 is not a little embarrassing. The *Guardian* reporter who interviewed Badiou in May 2012 noticed the gleam that came to his eyes as he spoke of his life between 1968-1980, "as if he's recalling an old love affair he can never forget" (Jeffries 2012).

This sketch isolates some of the problems in recent treatments of apocalyptic, and to point to ways in which the work of Rosenstock-Huessy contributes to contemporary thought. Rosenstock is as much a thinker of the Event as Badiou, but he is able to explain how Eventful disruptions leave their mark in ordinary life. He radicalizes and universalizes apocalyptic, but is able to give a compelling account of everyday apocalypse. The following pages are mostly expositional, but within the exposition is an implied explanation of Rosenstock's extraordinary version the apocalyptic explanation. It is due to two basic and related features of all his work: His historical concreteness on the one hand, and his Christian orthodoxy on the other. He is able to navigate the issues of eruption and statis because his thought is infused with the particularity of the incarnation, death, and resurrection of Jesus.

I. Calendars and Revolution.

Liberal Christianity dispensed with the primitive apocalypticism that confesses a real end of the world, but for Rosenstock-Huessy, the central affirmation of the creed is that "Christians believe in an end of the world, *not only once but again and again*" (1946:61-61; emphasis added). This is not simply a statement about repeated catastrophes, but a confession of faith in the intervention of Last Judgment into history. For Rosenstock, past faith in a final future judgment was of the essence of Christian faith and the motor of Christian energy. If there is a final judgment, then there is *a* trajectory to history, as it moves from the Alpha of creation toward the Omega point of the unity of the human race. These twin dimensions of judgment – the reality of real endings in the middle of history and the movement toward a final accounting – were essential to the Christian understanding of progress in history. Without a real the final judgment, history is headed nowhere; without apocalypses in the midst of time, events simply accumulate one after the other without discernible shape or meaning. Christian faith in a final judgment thus gave the world a vision of a unified history. As that faith withers under the influence of liberal theology, the West is left only with a vision of "progresses," technical improvements in the absence of hope for the progress of humanity as such. Rosenstock sees this failure of faith in the abandonment of the Christian division of time into BC and AD, which "signifies the capitulation of theology before 'science'" and is "part of the suicide of Europe" (1946:73).

Against this Christian creedal background, Rosenstock tells the story of Western history and the Christian church as a series of "apocalypses," eruptive revolutions that remake time, language, and human experience. Revolution is not an odd anomaly in political history. Rather, "there is no Christian country and no national character which can boast that it is founded on evolutionary institutions alone" (quoted in Cristaudo 2012: 250). Again and again, Rosenstock says, the church has been dead, but it has always risen again, often with more brilliance than before. Out of the carnage of the

church's bloodletting, she has produced a Dante, a More, a Luther (Cristaudo 2012: 209). Apocalypse settles out in the church's "risen" life.

The Western revolution most closely connected with Christian eschatology is the Papal Revolution of Gregory VII, which Rosenstock describes as the first total revolution. At its heart, the Papal revolution was mutiny against the papacy's reliance on the palace: "The papacy cut the direct and domestic relation between throne and altar in every manor or palace, and claimed the right to be guardian and spokesman for every local representative of the spirit." The key issue was the election of the Pope, and "what the reform party did tackle immediately was the exclusion of the Roman nobility from the election of the pope." Behind this severance of the palace from the Papacy was the papal obsession with the *orb*, the world. Popes announced their decisions *urbi et orbi*, as the *urbs* came to contain the entire *orbis*. This vision of a universal city had a direct political effect in the Crusades, when the Pope was able to go over the heads of the various political rulers to summon troops to battle. "By summoning the Christians to Jerusalem, the papacy resuscitated the maritime character of the old Roman Empire." In all these ways, the Pope functioned as the "true emperor" of Europe (Rosenstock-Huessy 1938: 533).

Popes saw this as a revival of Pauline spirit. Though claiming to be successors of Peter, Paul was invoked because of his universality, a view expressed in Peter Damian remark that Paul "is the right arm of God, held out over the whole breadth of the earth, presiding over all churches" (Rosenstock-Huessy 1938: 534). Paul was also called upon to support the doctrine of two swords; as a Benjamite, he was associated with spiritual and temporal authority. Thus, the new papal power was defended by appeals to both Peter and Paul: "The symbol of St. Paul, now reclaimed from the emperor, ceased to lead the unorganized movements in the Church against the established order. This prophetic function was forgotten for four hundred years, until it was re-invoked by

Luther." When later medievals attacked the Papacy, they did it in the name of John, and hoped not for a Pauline but for a Johannine age to dawn (2938: 535).

This medieval revolution was intertwined with the apocalyptic poetry of Dante's *Commedia*, which for the first time united planetary revolutions with human history by making the "revolutions of the stars the symbols of life, and their motivation identical with the passions of our own life" (Rosenstock-Huessy 1938: 500). Dante also gave expression to the imperial ideology of the time, according to which the emperor's interventions and judgments functioned as a foretaste of the final divine Judge. As he campaigned through Europe, "in Italy, in Poland, in France, in Burgundy, in Hungary, the emperor protected widows and orphans, the poor and the weak, against the local politician." The least serf could appeal over the head of the lord of the manor to the emperor's court, thus putting the emperor "in judgment over the wickedness of local despots" as a "legal vicar of the terrors of the Last Judgment" (Rosenstock-Huessy 1938: 502). The Last Judgment also supported a unified vision of Europe as a single world. As the final judgment transcended all local and partial judgments, and so unified and equalized humanity, so the emperor's court transcended local powers and unified the peoples of Europe in a new Christian Roman empire. Rosenstock provocatively suggests that "the Empire . . . was a Christian democracy" (Rosenstock-Huessy 1938: 507).

The greatest contribution of the Last Judgment to the medieval revolution came through the insertion of All Souls into the Christian calendar. Through the celebration of All Souls, the church "established the solidarity of all souls from the beginning of the world to the end of time" (Rosenstock-Huessy 1938: 507). It was truly the democracy of the dead, an embrace of death's role as the great equalizer into the heart of Christian civilization, and in this way "revealed man's dignity, his claim not to be thrown into the fire like a weed, but to be judged" (Rosenstock-Huessy 1938: 509). Consistent with the universal vision of All Souls, Odilo of Cluny initiated universal prayers in his

monasteries: "Up to that time, monks had prayed only for their abbey, their relatives, their friends, their connections" (Rosenstock-Huessy 1938: 509).

All Souls was a decree of emancipation because it incorporated the reality of death into the rhythm of life, a calendrical embodiment of the gospel of the resurrection of the dead. For Rosenstock, apocalyptic eruption of speech forms, molds, and articulates history (see Leithart 2010). Past and future are divided from each other by events and, importantly, our talk about events. The present becomes something more than the knife-edge of the passing moment because our speech and our listening create "bodies of time" with discernible beginnings and endings – the time of the play, the time of the game, the age of Victoria. Time is humanized, and it is no longer simply natural passage and movement, nor simply the dead time of the clock of physics, but historical time. These articulations of time are determined by human action. Humans act in revolutionary ways, and these revolutionary disruptions settle into a new social world through the human power to pronounce dead what is dead and to speak new things into being. Everything depends on getting the timing right. Rotten societies cannot be, and ought not be, propped up. Rosenstock is on the side of the revolutionaries. But the dead must be pronounced dead at the right time. Too early or too late, a death certificate multiplies violence and needless destruction (Cristaudo 2012: 245).

Humanized time becomes culturally embodied in calendars, which mark out the normal time of a civilization. Calendars reveal history as the "autobiography" of a race, ultimately the unified autobiography of the entire human race. Rosenstock-Huessy notes at the beginning of *Out of Revolution* that mankind would lack autobiography if human society had "always been like modern society: completely sensational, totally forgetful, and wonderfully devoid of memory." But humanity has not always been so: "mankind has always, with the utmost tenacity, cultivated its calendar," and this is in itself a cultivation of memory. "A day introduced into the calendar or a day stricken out

of the calendar, means a real change in the education and tradition of a nation. Mankind writes its own history long before the historians visit its battlefields; days, festivals, holidays, the order of meals, rest and vacations, together with religiously observed rituals and symbols, are sources of political history, thought rarely used by the average political or economic historian" (Rosenstock-Huessy 1938: 8).

Rosenstock-Huessy details many examples of how revolutions marked the calendar, articulated the Western past, and shaped its historical memory, but I will limit myself to one illustration, the Soviet calendar. In 1918, the Revolutionaries adopted the Gregorian calendar, synchronizing Russian time with the time of the West. At the same time, "local authorities began to emulate the French Revolution by altering the names of the months and days, substituting the names of old peasant leaders for Easter and Christmas, for example." The national government suppressed these local innovations, but also began a variety of calendrical forms. In 1929, they introduced a five-day week, and abolished the common day of rest. One effect was to undermine family and religious life: "A man and a wife would never have the same day off unless they were in the same 'labour calendar.' In a family of more working individuals it became still more difficult to synchronize the leisure time. Consequently, family ties were broken up as much as religion" (Rosenstock-Huessy 1938: 121).

A common day of rest was re-introduced in 1932, and by 1936 the Revolution had introduced a thorough revision of the calendar: "Whereas the year of 365 days remains divided into twelve months, two parallel weeks have been introduced, one of seven, and the other of six days. Labour, ministry and rest are to be regulated by the shorter, government and international intercourse by the longer. The rest days of the labour week fall on the sixth, twelfth, eighteen, twenty-fourth and thirtieth day of each month, with March 1 taking the place of the fifth rest day of February" (Rosenstock-Huessy 1938: 121-2). Extra holidays were fixed – five in the first order, ten or twelve of second-order – far fewer than the pre-Revolutionary calendar based inherited from the

Orthodox church. Lenin Day is celebrated on January 22, and the minor holidays celebrate "Youth, Women, Sports, Anti-War": "A new polytheism of group ideals is established. Great powers and principalities: Labour, Youth, Womanhood, Peace sway this world in endless recurrence" (1938: 122).

In this discussion, Rosenstock shows in concrete detail how the Event of the Russian Revolution becomes incorporated into the life of Russia through the calendar. Though the calendar signifies the "stasis" of time and is a marker of "normal time," it is *constituted* by disruptions. Without revolution, the calendar would have no shape; "normal" time would be un-articulated, truly inarticulate. The calendar is a mechanism for inserting apocalyptic events into the rhythms of society, for taking up death into daily life.

II. Everyday Apocalypse.

In contrast to Badiou and Benjamin, Rosenstock-Huessy sees the world as an inherently turgid place. History is not a darkness punctuated by a few bursts of light. Rosenstock radicalizes apocalypse to highlight how surprise, rupture, breach, and eruption are daily occurrences. More theologically, for Rosenstock the apocalypse of cross is not an occasional occurrence, but the very stuff of human life. We live in agony on the cross, pulled and torn at every moment, and yet at any moment we may also share in resurrection. Death and resurrection is not a rupture in a smooth surface of normalcy. Like Zizek, Rosenstock says that the surface is a rupture, but he is able to show far more fully than Zizek the daily disruptions of death and renewal.

Everyday apocalyptic is evident in Rosenstock's treatment of language. He is scornful of language philosophy for abstracting language from the situations in which humans speak and write. "For Wittgenstein," he writes, "philosophy is no more and no less than the analysis of statements in terms of other statements; what a living person does or should do about any state is not the province of philosophy." Wittgenstein,

Russell and the rest ignore the *reality* of words and symbols, and their "active and activating power" that not only comes from but can "even make human history." For all their logic, language philosophers remain human beings, a fact evident when they respond in anger to the charge that they are illogical and unreasonable: That is, they "respond illogically and unreasonably to at least the 'sacred names' of Logic and Reason" (quoted in Cristaudo 2012: 69). Philosophy in general has "unphilosophical," existential roots. Notable philosophers from Paracelsus to Descartes all the way to Nietzsche are "sons of the catastrophes through which they suffered." When other philosophers suffer other catastrophes, their suffering will squeeze out something else; prior philosophy must be "changed, must be lived down" (quoted in Cristaudo 2012: 75). Language philosophy tries to suppress the apocalyptic events force speech from us. The anti-apocalyptic bias of linguistics runs deep. Rosenstock spots an error in the basic assumption that language is a tool of the mind, used primarily to express thought. That theory is understandable coming from comfortable tenured professors, but in reality speech is a bid to overcome death or to "enhance the love that has befallen us" (quoted in Cristaudo 2012: 79, 81). Speech does not mainly function to communicate thought, but to awaken us from slumber (Cristaudo 2012: 87).

Positively, Rosenstock's grammatical sociology highlights the very features of language that language philosophy ignores. The dogmas of grammar are the final bastion of antiquity: "The schools have shelved Euclidean geometry, Ptolemaic astronomy, Galenian medicine, Roman law and Christian dogma," but cling to "ancient grammatical dogma" (Rosenstock-Huessy1970: 98). The problem with the "Alexandrian table of grammar" that every beginning Latin student employs (*amo*, *amas*, *amat*, etc.) is that "all persons are put through the same drill. They all seem to speak in the same manner." On the Alexandrian system, "all these sentences can and should be treated as of the same social character" (1970: 100). The texture of speech is smoothed over in what Rosenstock describes as a "fatal error" (1970: 100), because "*amo*

and *amas* are treated as though they too were mere statements of fact as *amat*" (1970: 108).

Existentially, grammatical persons are not on a par. We utter "*amat*" or "*amatur*" without any stake in the sentence we utter. The distancing third person can be uttered only by someone on the outside of the relationship of love, only by someone for whom the love spoken of is powerless. Third-person talk of God has the same effect: "God in prayer, God in the ten commandments – is the living God. God as the object of theology is powerless, a mere third person." The negation of the third person is a double-negation, not only abstracting the speaker from his speech from the listener as well. Bill and Ted might debate the truth of *amat* concerning Al, but the outcome of the debate is indifferent to Bill and Ted. Only when we recognize this double negation can we see "the abyss between the objective third person in *amat* and the two conversing people who exchange their views about him as subject and preject" (1970: 100-2).

If *amat* represents stasis, the first person represents a moment of rupture. *Amat* implies no commitment from either the speaking subject or the hearing praeject, but *amo* is risky business. To speak *amo* is to admit I am involved in the act of which we speak. I cannot say *amo* detachedly, without self-commitment; if I do, I am guilty of deception. Anyone who says *amo* "runs a risk which he does not run in speaking of somebody else! He runs the risk of destroying the act to which the sentence testifies" (Rosenstock-Huessy 1970: 102). As every Shakespearean romantic comedy shows, a man who says *amo* risks interference – from a rival, from parents, from the law (1970: 103). *Amo* is socially disruptive in a way that *amat* is not. A report that says "amat" doesn't change anything; it conservatively describes what is already the case. But "the speaker of a sentence in the first person cannot help changing his own social situation simply by divulging any act, thought, feeling, intention of himself" (1970: 103). Because of the risks, *amo* tends to be uttered in the safety of a private space: "To the world, if I am intelligent at all, I shall not say *amo* but *uxor mea est*. That is, I shall transform the first

person sentence into a third person sentence," since the latter does not invite interference, rivalry, jealousy, wrath (1970: 104).

To utter the *first* person, one must break through a natural reluctance to express what is within. To utter a *second* person sentence, we have to break through the reluctance of a hearer to hear. To speak a sentence in the second person is always to assume an office; there is an implicit hierarchy in every "you." Even if the statement is simply "you have bad breath," it assumes that the speaker has some authority to speak, or it will be greeted with a response ranging between indifference and a punch in the snoot: "Why is advice unasked for never given successfully? Because it has no power to unlock the recipient's ear" (Rosenstock-Huessy 1970: 106). To utter a second-person sentence, we have to convert the hearer into a listener" (1970: 106). In sum, "the speaker of *amo* has made up his mind to break his silence about himself although this means running the risk of intervention. The listener of *amas* has made up his mind to invite interference. The speaker and listener of *amat* have nothing to readjust in their own political attitude before they listen to this fact. They are neither defying nor inviting interference in their own affairs" (1970: 106).

Amo and *amas* disrupt not only the life of the speaker but that of the listener. Robert Jenson has made the Rosenstockian observation that every utterance breaks into the listener's world and opens up fresh possibility for the future. If I say "I love you," I forcibly present some options to the hearer – to respond in kind, to recoil, to draw near or to flee. A personal address is always an implicit second-person; despite its strict grammatical form "Good morning" is not an indicative statement about the weather but an invitation to conversation. Like *amo*, it breaks into the life of the hearer and forces him or her to choose a future – to smile, to extend the conversation, to look desperately for another seat on the bus (Jenson 1995).

Whoever speaks kills and makes alive (Rosenstock-Huessy 1963: 1.143; "Wer spricht, toten und macht lebendig"). We miss this because we learn grammar in a form

that already embodies the Cartesian primacy of the Ego, a grammar that makes the "I" the "first person." On the contrary, Rosenstock insists, "all our experience teaches us exactly the opposite of this Greek premise, that the single 'I' is primary." A child develops by "gradually stak[ing] out its borders as an independent entity," by siphoning out the "thousand cares, impressions, and influences which surround, flow around, and beset it." What a child first recognizes is not a world, nor father and mother, but "that it is spoken to": "It is smiled at, entreated, rocked, comforted, punished, given presents, or nourished. It is first a 'you' to a powerful being outside itself – above all to its parents" (Rosenstock-Huessy 1988: 16). Goethe said that a father is always his daughter's first god. Rosenstock-Huessy agrees, adding that "He is so because he is present for his daughter before her own 'I' is, and because he bestows on her the consciousness of herself, by addressing her as 'you'" (1988: 16). Rupture is not a break in the social foundation. It is foundational.

Not all social relations, not all speech situations, not all forms of silence, are the same. When two or three are gathered, they may possess a single spirit of unanimity, they may split, they may be cautious, and the may be strangers. In the first case, speaker and listener already share one spirit as members of the same "in-group." When two meet as strangers, they are "outside" one another, with no common spirit and no common language, and the mode of speech and listening is different. Speech situations may involve old and young, as the old utter sacramental words to be repeated by the young; or friends in agreement, so that their relation is like a soloist and a chorus; strangers are people in disagreement, and depend on question and answer; and leader and led are in a command and response relationship (1970: 124). In sum,

Magister and disciple, singer and chorus, leader and respondent are of equal originality in their linguistic situation as the interlocutors of a discussion in the form of question and answer. By isolating the interrogatory mood, the origin of question and answer

was inexplicable until today. As soon as we compare the prosaic process of question and answer to its parallels in historical tradition (formula and repetition), in musical unanimity (singer and chorus), in political challenge (imperative and response), question and answer are disclosed as one application of the general principle of social relations to be established through speech, the application to the meeting of two people from different spaces, and therefore of a different standard of objectivity (Rosenstock-Huessy 1970: 126).

One of the themes highlighted in this paragraph is the centrality of imperatives. Contrary to modern prejudice, imperatives are emancipating, not confining. "Love God and your neighbor as yourself" are the most freeing words ever spoken. A command cuts through the confusion and paralysis of indecision and forces us to action. We act only if we are "able to hear without [ourselves] the clear-cut alternative: shall I do this, or not do this?" The "disease of our time" is a problem of "conflicting suggestions in great number," and only an authoritative "Do this" cuts through and leads to action. The fundamental imperative, however, is the imperative "Listen" or "Be interested." This is not only the general imperative behind all other imperatives, but it is the imperative behind all other forms of speech. The scientist carries out his objective science in response to a summons, "Let there be science!" Rosenstock illustrates the more general point by thinking through the phrase "The darkened moon." This may be a piece of lyrical speech, part of a poem; it might be a narrative, part of a story; it could be a phrase from a scientific treatise. But behind all these is the imperative: "Look, the darkened moon." Each of these is intonated differently: The poetic speech is rhythmical and emotional, the factual definition is pronounced with accent, the story aims at propriety. But these all depends on an emphatic statement, "Look! A Darkened Moon! Pay attention! Listen! Hear!" If there is an implied imperative in every utterance, there is likewise an implied "apocalyptic" intervention. Derrida is right that apocalypse is a

"transcendental" mode of speech, right to see it in the imperative "Come" (Derrida 1993: 156-7). To that insight, however, Rosenstock adds rich and concrete detail.

In Rosenstock's grammatical sociology, in short, *everyday* language is disruptive speech. Imperatives, names, direct second-person address, first-person revelations are the stuff of social interaction, and each of them would be a rupture in the fabric, did the fabric exist at all. For Rosenstock-Huessy, the fabric is itself constituted by rupture. Apocalyptic is the ordinary course of life.

III. Conclusion.

It might seem that I have extended "apocalyptic" to the breaking point, using it in so attenuated a metaphorical sense that it loses all connection with its historical meaning. That is not, however, Rosenstock's position. On the contrary, he sees quite intimate connections between apocalyptic or eschatology in the normal Christian sense of the term and the everyday apocalyptic that I have described.

Speech removes the skin that separates human beings and unites together in a single complex action, and for Rosenstock-Huessy this dynamic articulates time into "bodies" with distinct beginnings and endings. An order given by one person initiates a series of actions by those who are under his orders; but the action is not done until it is reported back – not in an imperative but in an indicative. The order-and-report sequence creates "one common time" between the commander and the one obeying the order, a "supertime" that "neglects the separation of two bodies and their biological times." Speech creates a single time. This is not accurately described as a "common frame of reference" since a "'frame' seems to exist outside our sayings or acts." It is rather a "field of correspondence" that "breaks down the separation of two 'self-contained' bodies; it gets 'under the skin,' and they act as a single will from the moment the order is given to the moment it is reported fulfilled. After this, the field collapses

and disappears" (Rosenstock-Huessy 1981: 47). Time in daily experience as in historical events is articulated, textured, given its specific contours by our speech.

Speech has this time-shaping power because it has the capacity to declare beginnings and endings. The past is not past until we pronounce it so; the dead must be certified as dead; the dead must be buried with fitting rites and words. Rosenstock provides a concrete illustration: "As long as people have not *said so*, they may sleep, eat, work together, and yet not be married at all." Until they pronounce the "I do" of their wedding vows, they have not closed off their bachelor options (Rosenstock-Huessy 1946: 79). For Rosenstock, only this distinguishes a Christian view of time from pagan cyclicism: "the cycle is an eternal myth at which we stare," while Christian progress arises from "an act of our own creative faith," an act that simultaneously declares what is dead and opens a pathway to the future (1946: 79).

Rosenstock links this power of speech to the Christian gospel, which, he claims, is fundamentally an eschatological announcement. Paganism resisted death, and creatively constructed mechanisms of death avoidance. Christianity embraces the reality of death in life, and turns the old common sense on its head: Instead of accepting that life leads to death, Christianity claimed that death opens up life, and thereby made it possible for human beings to re-enact the death and resurrection of Jesus over and over within history. Jesus was the first to live "*from the end of time* back into his own age" (1946: 67), since by the resurrection He lives on the far side of death. Christians follow Jesus in putting to death their old selves, their old loyalties, allegiances, social networks, confident of a life beyond that grave. In this way, humanity "has acquired partnership in God's deepest wisdom, when to let go, when to say farewell, when to end a chapter of evolution" (1946: 68). It is the wisdom to *end*, to declare the dead to be dead, without being paralyzed by the fear of death but instead being buoyed by the confidence of new life. Christianity and future are synonymous (1946: 62), but that is only because the "last judgment" and the "end of the world" have been embraced in the

middle of history, only because of the incorporation of apocalyptic endings and new beginnings into daily experience.

By the same token, Rosenstock's biblical conception of creation *ex nihilo* also supports an apocalyptic outlook. In ancient mythologies and philosophies, the cosmos takes shape from a formless but somehow-existing prime matter. That matter may be chaotic, but it provides a background for the emergence of an ordered world. For Christianity, though, creation is itself eruption, a bringing-into-being of something when there was nothing. There is no pre-existing surface to disrupt. Creation is sheer disruption, and new creation is a volcano in the midst of the upheavals of history, a volcano that gives birth to more, to *constant*, fresh upheavals. Rosenstock is thus able to sustain his vision of everyday apocalypse – of moment-by-moment disruption, challenge, break, new paths – only because of his commitment to Christian faith.

Bibliography.

Badiou, Alain (2003). *Saint Paul: The Foundation of Universalism* (Stanford: Stanford University Press).

Cohn, Norman (1970). *The Pursuit of the Millennium: Revolutionary Millenarians and Mystical Anarchists of the Middle Ages* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

Collins, John J. (1998). *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (2d ed; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans).

Cristaudo, Wayne (2012). *Religion, Redemption, and Revolution: The New Speech Thinking of Franz Rosenzweig and Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press).

Davis, Joshua and Harinck, Douglas (2012). *Apocalyptic and the Future of Theology: With and Beyond J. Louis Martyn* (Eugene, OR: Cascade).

Derrida, Jacques (1993). *Raising the Tone of Philosophy: Late Essays by Immanuel Kant, Transformative Critique by Jacques Derrida* (Peter Fenves, ed.; Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press).

Depoortere, Frederiek (2009). *Badiou and Theology* (London: Bloomsbury).

Jeffries, Stuart (2012). "Alain Badiou: A Life in Writing," available online at www.theguardian.com/culture/2012/may/18/alain-badiou-life-in-writing, accessed January 8, 2014.

Jenson, Robert (1995). *Essays in Theology of Culture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans).

Leithart, Peter J. (2009). "Speech on the Cross," in Wayne Cristaudo and Frances Huessy, eds., *The Cross and the Star* (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Press).

Leithart, Peter J. (2010). "The Social Articulation of Time in Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Modern Theology* 26: 197-219.

O'Regan, Cyril (2009). *Theology and the Spaces of Apocalyptic* (Milwaukee: Marquette University Press).

Rosenstock-Huessy, Eugen (1938). *Out of Revolution: Autobiography of Western Man* (London: Jarrolds Publishers).

Rosenstock-Huessy, Eugen (1940). "Man Must Teach." In *Rosenstock-Huessy Papers*, *Volume I*. (Norwich, VT: Argo Books).

Rosesnstock-Huessy, Eugen (1946). *The Christian Future: Or the Modern Mind Outrun* (San Francisco: Harper).

Rosenstock-Huessy, Eugen (1954). "Time-Bettering Days." In *Rosenstock-Huessy Papers, Volume I* (Norwich, VT: Argo Books).

Rosenstock-Huessy, Eugen (1963) *Die Sprache des Menschengeschlects: Eine Leibhaftige Grammatik in Vier Teilen* (2 vols.; Heidelberg: Verlag Lambert Schneider).

Rosenstock-Huessy, Eugen (1970). *Speech and Reality* (Norwich, VT: Argo Books).

Rosenstock-Huessy, Eugen (1978). *Fruit of Lips* (Pittsburgh: Pickwick).

Rosenstock-Huessy, Eugen (1981). *The Origin of Speech* (Norwich, VT: Argo Books).

Rosenstock-Huessy, Eugen (1988). "Practical Knowledge of the Soul" (Norwich, VT: Argo Books).

Zizek, Slavoj (2010). *Living in the End Times* (London: Verso).