

# EUGEN ROSENSTOCK-HUESSY SOCIETY of NORTH AMERICA

Published with the support of the Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy Fund



## News & Reflections

(April 2010)



### *Freya von Moltke (1911-2010)* *Cynthia Harris (1923-2010)*

THE WIDE CIRCLE of those whose lives were touched or influenced by Rosenstock-Huessy lost two souls early this year, both women and both of unique importance at quite different periods in Rosenstock-Huessy's life: Freya von Moltke and Cynthia Harris. The passing of Freya von Moltke on January 1, 2010, at age 98 was probably noticed by many of the readers of this newsletter. Obituaries appeared in major newspapers around the globe, and we are including in this mailing the remembrance of Freya that appeared in the *Congressional Record* on February 4, 2010, as delivered by Senator Patrick Leahy of Vermont. Hence, not many words are required here to praise this distinguished woman.

In the decades after World War II when increasing attention was given to those in Germany who sought to undermine the Third Reich, Freya achieved renown for her role as a leader with her husband, Helmuth, of the Kreisau Circle, a group that conspired against the Nazi regime. The Circle's activities eventually led to Helmuth's execution by Hitler early in 1945, a deed that it is impossible to think about without outrage.

Much of that story is told in a deeply moving, extraordinary book, *Letters to Freya, 1939-1945*, by Helmuth James von Moltke, ed. and trans. by Beate Ruhm von Oppen (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1990). The work consists of the increasingly subversive

letters that Helmuth wrote to Freya during the war years, which survived only because Freya managed to conceal them in beehives on the von Moltke estate at Kreisau, now Krzyzowa, Poland.

In 1960, not long after Rosenstock-Huessy's wife, Margrit, died, Freya, with one of her two sons, came to live with Eugen at Four Wells, and she was his companion until his death in 1973. Rosenstock had known Freya's martyred husband in the 1920s when Helmuth was a student.

Twenty-three years Rosenstock-Huessy's junior, Freya dedicated herself after emigrating to promoting his work. A cosmopolitan woman, with a law degree earned in Germany, she had the determination, skills, and experience to be an effective partner.

Shortly after Prof. Rosenstock-Huessy's death, she founded the Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy Fund, which has been at the center of various ERH constructive projects in the U. S. up to the present, including translation and publication, the preservation of the tapes of classroom lectures, transcriptions of those tapes, sponsorship of conferences, and much else.

One massive task that Freya undertook was the gathering of all of Rosenstock-Huessy's publications, some 35,000 pages, for microfilming, which when finished came to eighteen reels in all. Those films have since been converted into a digital format and are available on a DVD.

Freya was a unifying force amidst those devoted to preserving the legacy of Rosenstock-Huessy. Her death takes from us the last living person who could

speak *for* Rosenstock-Huessy. Aside from his own voice, expressed in books and tapes, everything else said now concerning him is merely reminiscence.

### *Cynthia Harris*

Cynthia Harris, born in 1923 in Winetka, Illinois, also died early in January of this year. She was eighteen when, in 1941, she became part of the small contingent of women (or in those days, “girls”) at Camp William James. She had been introduced to the group by Katherine Taylor of the Shady Hill School in Cambridge, Massachusetts. By all accounts, Cynthia was a vibrant, unconventional person, and in short order she became a special protégée of Eugen and Margrit, both then in their fifties.

It is evident that she brought out in Eugen a profound, even passionate, urge to shape her mind, inspiring some of his best and most accessible writing in a series of twenty-one long letters to her over a two-year period, totaling about 500 pages. For this still very young woman who was only a sophomore in college and knew hardly anything of life or scholarship, Rosenstock-Huessy made an effort, as he said, to select from his mental “Encyclopedia” that which Cynthia might “actually need or can carry.” The correspondence, he told her, “will not be as important for you, maybe, as it is for me. For, to channelize an ocean, is as difficult as to make power out of the waves of the sea. But this is the task.” (Feb. 14, 1943).

The “Letters to Cynthia,” then, only one of which has yet been published, form a kind of primer to a large segment of Rosenstock-Huessy’s thought, page after page where he took the time to explain and elucidate for a young person ideas that elsewhere he might simply have left to his readers to unravel.

The one published letter was written in October 1944 and appeared under the title “Hitler and Israel, or On Prayer,” first in the *Journal of Religion* in April 1945, and then as an appendix to *Judaism Despite Christianity* (1969), Rosentock’s English language edition of the famous correspondence

in 1916 between him and Franz Rosenzweig. In that appendix, Rosenstock-Huessy offers a title to the whole series of letters to this young woman, “Reconquest of Our Era.” He meant by this phrase the necessity imposed upon humankind at all times, maybe especially in the 20th and 21st centuries, to recapture from the distant past that which is most needed to cope with the problems of the day. We must look backward to earlier eras of human creativity in order to find the way into the future, a complicated belief of Rosenstock’s, the meaning of which cannot be explicated here but which goes far beyond merely looking to the past as a moral teacher.

The “Letters to Cynthia” were provoked by her enrollment in Radcliffe College as a sophomore in the fall of 1942, after Camp William James had dissolved in the preceding spring. Cynthia had previously spent a year at Wellesley.

Eugen’s first letter to her, in this remarkable correspondence, is dated February 7, 1943, that is, early in the second semester of the school year. Rosenstock-Huessy knew the Radcliffe/Harvard ambience well, having taught at Harvard from 1933 to 1935, and his letters derive in part from his impatience with, not to say disdain for, the content of the courses Cynthia was taking. Most of Cynthia’s professors, or the professoriate at Harvard in general, were, in Rosenstock-Huessy’s eyes, good, honest, and learned men, but they were also utterly deluded, subjected to the restrictive rules of their disciplines and willingly wearing the blinders that the supposed “scientific objectivity” of the academy imposed on them.

At Dartmouth, an all male college until 1972, Rosenstock-Huessy had no opportunity to teach women. He also had no daughters, just the one son, Hans. We have, then, in these letters to Cynthia, whom Eugen sometimes called by her nickname “Sinkey,” his loving tutelage of a different kind of being with different needs.

Rosenstock-Huessy was the farthest thing one can imagine from a male chauvinist—he after all

grew up in a family as the only son with six sisters, and he deeply valued the “feminine” side of the cosmos. Unlike some ardent feminist proponents today, however, he perceived and delineated the inherent, the *essential*, differences between men and women, which are not reducible simply to cultural factors. For him, these differences were part of the health and balance of mankind, the basis of much good in society and history.

The set of “Letters to Cynthia” came to an end in 1944, but by no means the friendship. Cynthia graduated from Radcliffe in 1945 and volunteered to serve as a secretary to Prof. Rosenstock-Huessy at Four Wells. He had had no such help, certainly, since his arrival in the U. S. in 1933, and the offer was welcome. Margrit commented that Cynthia’s presence was a blessing, since Eugen had never been able to afford a cleaning woman, let alone a secretary. One Dartmouth student from ca. 1948 recollected that Cynthia drove the professor to class regularly.

Cynthia lived at Four Wells on and off until 1950. When Eugen and Margrit Rosenstock-Huessy made a trip to Egypt in February 1950, Cynthia was in the party, along with C. Russell Keep, a Dartmouth student (class of 1951) who in the spring of 1949 had initiated the recording of Prof. Rosenstock-Huessy’s classroom lectures.

Following the Egypt visit, Cynthia traveled in Europe and eventually returned to the mid-West. Margrit Huessy visited Cynthia and her parents in Winetka in 1952. In the course of the next decade, Cynthia earned a medical degree from Case Western Reserve and went on to a distinguished career as a psychiatrist.

The future biographer of Rosenstock-Huessy will have to devote considerable space to Cynthia Harris. It is possible that the letters to Cynthia in 1943 and 1944 were not entirely re-worked material that was already well formed in Rosenstock-Huessy’s mind, but in fact were in part some of the first written adumbrations of his universal history and other subjects. If such was the case, Cynthia, at

Harvard, in that period, in the midst of the Second World War, was Rosenstock-Huessy’s unlikely muse, giving him an opportunity to look at the world through the eyes of the rising generation and generally to lament the state of higher education at the time.

But the story does not end in the 1950s. Cynthia, and later with her husband, Leo Oudejans-Harris, never lost sight of the power and significance of Rosenstock-Huessy’s thought and the urgency that it be disseminated. The Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy Fund, founded by Freya in 1975, has distributed in the course of its operations in the past thirty-five years as much as \$500,000, all made up of donations to the Fund. Of that amount, a considerable portion was donated by Cynthia and Leo. Cynthia and Leo’s contributions helped to make possible the transcriptions of the lectures, the microfilming of ERH’s works, the conversion of the films to DVD, the current digital archive project, and much else.

### *Excerpts from Letters to Cynthia*

BELOW ARE EXCERPTS from five letters that Rosenstock-Huessy wrote to Cynthia Harris, early in the correspondence. The letters vary greatly in length; one is 9 pages another is 38 pages in typescript! The editor of this newsletter has not seen Cynthia’s letters to Eugen, nor is it likely that all have survived. But there was definitely a dialogue, with Cynthia raising questions or objections, to which Eugen replied. Rosenstock-Huessy was often at his best when responding. For full understanding, all of the letters to Cynthia must be read in sequence, because to some degree they are cumulative, with later letters building on, and referring to, earlier ones.

Were these letters ever to be published, a number of editorial or textual issues would have to be addressed. ERH’s use of commas, for example, will seem peculiar to those following present-day rules for English. His side of the correspondence was originally composed in longhand, i.e., not typed, for the most part. Some of the typescripts preserve

his handwritten corrections or additions. The typist innocently introduced some spelling errors that Rosenstock-Huessy would never have made, such as writing "supercede" for "supersede". It has not yet been firmly established who prepared the typed versions, but it is likely that many were done by Cynthia herself later in the 1940s.

For our limited purposes here, however, all such questions can be set aside. Bracketed insertions in italic are editorial comments or interventions; bracketed insertions in roman are plausible additions to the text, needed for clarity, or are restorations by the editor of the original text. Occasionally paragraph indentations have been introduced that were not in the original typescripts.



Four Wells, February 22, 1943 (Ltr. #3)

Dear Cynthia:

In your government course, you say, the most impressive fact brought out so far was the functioning of party rule. You had imagined that the system would work if the right people were elected. And that the election of the wrong simply was a deficiency which could be repaired at any moment by the voters. Now you find that this is not so. It is intrinsic to the system that national issues play little or no part because our party system depends on local bosses and is kept alive by patronage. Both elements have no connection either with patriotism or with looking ahead into the future, or with any virtues of citizenship.

I am glad that you had a look into the viscera of party government. Because only then can you coordinate it with the great events of history. Our own biological metabolism is dependent on the digestive tract, and the viscera of the individual body are not appetizing. However, this same human viscera, thanks to its inner organization of stomach, liver, kidneys, and bowels, etc., etc., is a marvel. Warring tendencies are reconciled inside our body, and exploited to produce high tension and pressures of tremendous efficacy.

The unappetizing details of party government are the viscera of the body politic thanks to which civil war is avoided. The same passions which would inevitably lead to war: greed, hatred, jealousy, ambition, fear, are

burned up inside the party rule, instead of breaking out in rebellion and strife.

Any organism pacifies passions which are mutually destructive if moving "outside" against each other. The same water or wind which would extinguish the fire, when applied externally, in the blacksmith shop can be put to good use for increasing the efficiency of the blacksmith's operations. Our civilian mind is so corrupted by the idealistic trash taught for the last century that we compare "democracy" to an ideal of truth, goodness, and beauty. And hence find it is not so. If you wish to know what democracy does, what all government does, be satisfied to know that it prevents war. That is all, but it is tremendous. Because war is excluded by government, it must exploit the passions which lead to war for peace. Murder must be punished by capital punishment not because of any cruelty but because otherwise the clan of the person murdered would relapse into self-help, into vendetta. . . .

Our humanitarians used to condemn capital punishment for one simple reason. They did not see lurking in the background any primeval passions any longer. The state was requested to be "good", "decent", "beautiful". But the state is the solution of man's relation with other men "short of war". And any solution "short of war" is already a great attainment. The sword of justice is the same sword, waged in war, only war is organized resistance against crime.

It seems an inveterate American fiction that legal democracy lives by persuasion and consent. I have heard this humbug quite often myself. It is a stockphrase in debating the merits of our system. Let me insert here the letter of General Sherman in which he protested against this doctrine sixty years ago.

"I attended the Centennial ceremonies in honor of the Supreme Court yesterday. The whole was superb in all its proportions, but it was no place for a soldier. . . .

"The Bar Association of the United States has manifestly cast aside the sword of liberty, justice and law; has obscured the significance of the great seal of the United States, with its emblematic olive branch and thirteen arrows 'all proper', and now claims that, without force, law and moral suasion have carried us through one hundred years of history. . . . If in [these speeches] you discover any sense of obligation to the soldier element you will be luckier than I, a listener.

“From 1861 to 1865 the Supreme Court was absolutely paralyzed. Their decrees and writs were treated with contempt south of the Potomac and Ohio. . . . War and the armed power of the nation alone removed the barrier and restored to the United States Courts their lawful jurisdiction.”

The pernicious doctrine of a “government by talk” pervades all American official teachings or opinions. . . . We have to rediscover our sense of “obligation to the soldier element”, or there soon will be no government.

My constant advocacy of this soldier element, for peace time consumption, and not only for foreign wars, originated in this attitude described by General Sherman, and I am sure that William James, whose two brothers fought in and were ruined by the Civil War, got his “Moral Equivalent for War” from his disgust with the lawyers fiction of a government by persuasion. . . .



Four Wells, March 11, 1943 (Ltr. #4)

Dear Cynthia,

. . .

Even questions have their very precise social function. Gerda is back in our house since Philip has scarlet fever. This 3 year girl is asking me incessantly the two types of questions: Why do you do that? What is that?

In watching her I became convinced that both questions are not asked without real pressure by her. She fears to be left out when she does not know. She feels life as a process and she desires to be a partner, a “dancer” in the cosmic dance. Her question is not neutral, not curious, but fearful. How can I participate? The why and what express her effort to acquire new keys for participation. If she can be informed why?, she can join in the process unerringly. The question, then, makes her out not as an onlooker, but as a person thrown out by changes in the cosmic order and trying to re-enter it; the order as so far conceived by her three years, is upset by something new. And the new must be assimilated. Or it contains the danger of excluding her, Gerda, from further participation.

All young people are eager for novelty because by learning new things they secure their participation in a world which for the adult is quite old and from time immemorial. Newness is so often just the newcomer’s own newness. And his eagerness is very vital to him since his qualities as member of the cosmic ballet depend on his

questioning in time and getting the right answer.

This [makes?] out the question as based on a new person’s volunteering to enter society. Questions are not meaningful if they attack the existence of any truth, any order, any power to join. When I ask for the road to Winetka I assume that 1. there is an answer, 2. that somebody knows this answer, 3. that somebody [should?] take this road to Winetka. I believe then in truth, in man, and in geography’s order. You may deny God by no longer asking for truth, you may deny man by no longer trusting him, you may deny the earth by committing suicide. But you cannot do so by ASKING those same questions as you quote Spengler, by denying God, Truth, progress. The simple fact that you speak, although in mere question, interrogatively, has ushered you into a universe in which truth and trust and toil are accepted by you. Truth from God, trust in man, toil on earth, are the pre-requisites for asking any question. . . .



Four Wells, April 5, 1943 (Ltr. #6)

Dear Prejective, Cynthia,

. . .

You have entered college at a moment when the baby has been thrown out with the bath: no era is left; the whole Christian era is discredited. For some reasons unknown to the scholars, they find themselves huddled together at Harvard, Yale, Columbia, piecing together tidbits of information about anything under the sun, defying all general ideas, beliefs, as prejudicial to their “pure” research, and now involved in a gigantic war, without doing more than hanging on to their Spanish, Mexican, Egyptian, Chinese histories. And yet something great has been prepared by this destruction of the “classic civilization”, or “humanistic” chronology: Although the dream of a golden age of Perikles, or of Renaissance, has become untenable, the boundaries of the historical horizon have been enlarged and by now, they encompass the whole of the life of man: prehistories, histories of civilization, and histories of the Church, histories of East and West, Social, Political, religious, histories.

Intentionally, I call them histories, in the plural. For the “multocular” views are most confusing. What they have in common is that they lie within an enlarged, more universal horizon of many thousands of years. The objects are all there. What is lacking is the mighty tidal wave, the “bore” as they call it in the Bay of Fundy; this

bore sweeps all the subjective partakers of history 200 feet high to the altitude at which the dynamo of integration can begin to operate.

At the end of this letter, I may be able to prove to you why “honest work”, as done by the historians of the last two generations depends on “heroic”, creative moments from which they receive their orders and directives. Workers in the field of the sciences are blind to what they achieve. As they work away, day after day, they do something but as Heraklitus put it: Those who are asleep, dream of the world as though it were their own and do not understand how they affect the real world of all men.

MERE WORK NARROWS. The farmer behind his plow and the scholar behind his desk, narrow their humanity, by the division of labor. As the lines engraved on the leaf of a tree all run towards the rim and end abruptly, so we all in our daily work, tend to something special or particular and must have our common task in back of us; a priori, id est, before we set out to run our course, the meaning of our various activities must be ascertained.

Your criticism of the teaching in college need not turn against that which they do. IT IS ONLY IMPOSSIBLE IN THE THINGS WHICH THEY DO NOT DO AND, BECAUSE OF THAT, DENY TO EXIST. The histories told in College all would make sense if they still admitted their dependency on the Volta[i]rean religion as vicarious clergymen. Having broken away from their own heroic origin, they have become mere activities. Activities carry no sanctions or authority with them. If they proclaim to be THE only intelligent activities—yesterday night a colleague seriously said that Germany had to be cured by “education” and “free discussion”—they become ridiculous.

Not the fact that somebody teaches this or that, is to be criticised, but the fact that he teaches it as though this covered the whole ground, and as though it were INDEPENDENT of MORE IMPORTANT other processes of the human spirit, deserves to be hemmed in, by your resistance.

This is the awakening into One Common World of which Heraklitus of Ephesus spoke 500 B. C. a thinker to whom we go back today, for good reason. For he looked through the dreams which go with all our special activities, the soap bubbles around the small actual performance, and by introducing the term “dream” for his self centered thinking, he could state: only for those who

awake from their dreams does a common world order come into existence. The historians fuss it into tidbits, not because of their bending over their special period, but by denying the majestic bore of faith which lifted them up after 1789 and put them down in their particular chairs of history., by forgetting [that the philosopher?] took the place of the religious history of salvation, by clergymen. . . .



Four Wells, April 21, 1943 (Ltr. #7)  
Rome's Birthday

Dear Cynthia:

You have surrendered your vision of an era for the individual too quickly, perhaps. And I myself who opposed you, now should like to qualify my reply. The reason for my uneasiness is to be found in your renewed question about war.

Why, you say, should we accept War as a constituent of life's self-affirmation, together with Art, Religion, Law? In other words, you are pained by my seemingly crude juxtaposition of those four ultimate self assertions of conscious mankind.

Take art and war. It is true that we do speak of the art of war. [And?] Ruskin, the Esthete, could speak of war as our artistic force. But [a?] humanity which worships Bach and Beethoven seems to live on a plane [that?] is sublimated beyond war's atrocities. Higher life, we might call this, and look down on war as bestial. And the individual's era for which [you?] asked, would express our heart's pang when war invades this “higher” life.

Now, in Beethoven's case, the military character of many of his themes has been often acknowledged. Military music, then, is the “usable” music to which Beethoven has the same connection as Bach has to Liturgical choral singing. Marching themes and bugal [sic] signals, enter the musical vocabulary with him. . . . Music enobles and transfigures war. Tyrtaios' hymns were Sparta's [fi?] contribution to art, chorus songs in which the community was grouped [into?] the soldiers, who went to war, the veterans who had been to war, the young, who would go to war one day. This classical distribution of three generations according to their relation to the campaign in hand—in [it,] after it, before it—is an illustration to the Preface for the Future of our Era [*This is, perhaps, a reference to ERH's “The Future Way of Life,” 1942, unpublished but available in facsimile in the Argo Books compilation, “Rosenstock-Huessy Papers,” vol. I (1981)*] which I sent to you a week ago.

There, I tried to rediscover the importance of our relation to war for our common faith, beyond all mere philosophy.

Tyrtaios and Beethoven both heroise war. In fact, the hero of the “Eroica” originally had been the victorious general Bonaparte. And not before Napoleon made himself emperor, disappointed he Beethoven. The composer was in full sympathy with the “war lord” Bonaparte. The “Eroica” carries the very name hero in its title. But heroization occurs in all art, Romeo, Faust, Moby Dick, as well as in Beethoven or in the Lincoln Memorial. An heroic human, you will concur, is connected with war, in some form or another, from a crusader and a Christian soldier to the hero who battles syphilis germs in his laboratory.

Hence, art and war are intimately related. Society uses the artist [as] its employee for “heroization” and in this sense the most individualistic creature, the artist, is both a product of victory and its transfigurer. The victorious city pays, rewards, supports the arts, for its glory.

Nevertheless, I shall not stress this dependency of the artist on war, of his “higher” life on this lower struggle. This would be a persuasive argument, in debate, and might silence an opponent. We, however, [are] not debating for the purpose of clubbing each other down; we are medi[tating]. And behind your reluctance looms a more central principle, man’s profound detestation of the slaughterhouse which history seems to be, is, so far. This smell of blood and corpses is so penetrating when we dare to face the reality of bombed cities and devastated areas, that a healthy person might react as Israel and condemn all art simply because it embellishes the victories of war[r]iors and the merciless triumphs of Kings. Such a person might say: I did not know that art is the fruit of victories. If this is true, art as well as war must be given up, if this is our way out of war. Judaism in its hostility against the graven image had in mind the “steles” (pillars) of triumph into which all Egyptian and Babylonian sculpture burst, a tradition which Rome carried and which Napoleon renewed with the Arc de Triomphe in Paris.

The home coming commander-in-chief—and emperor, emperor, is the Latin term for this office—had to march through this arc as he had to do when he left, in a ceremony of purification, technically called “lustratio”. By this act he became “illustrious”, which means pure as the sun, fiery as the heavenly fire, the incarnation of the God of lightening in the sky, of Jupiter[,] for this day. For, this marching through the arc, the gates of heaven, through which the suns rise, yes suns (there are 365 suns

a year). And the victor and his army gained the quality of astral bodies, and made their campaign one of the glorious revolutions of the sky. (This “lustration” was widely spread[,] and among the “Aryans” in Persia, the naive faith in the identity of fire in heaven and on earth, through lustration was particularly strong.)

The fact that man could slay the enemy, exalted him to the gods. Israel came into this world of “illustrations” and deified warriors as the catalyst. It safeguarded the gulf between man and god, and widened it. For this purpose, the warring kings had to be deprived of their means of heroization, and these means were the graven images! The Israelites abstained from art in order to get rid of war. Jerusalem deserved the name of city of peace only in as far as warriors could not become gods there. For the result of war was so often the victor’s deification. . . .

But let us take the more radical step down into our innermost fear. We shrink from the constant sacrifices of life, sacrifices made for some undefined and indefinable something like democracy or mankind or freedom but made by very definite human beings. Moloch seems to ask for victims again. Decent people are “murdered” in war, the pacifists shout, although murder is a complete misnomer for a duel (in which both sides fight and expect to be fought!) (duel and “bellum”, in Latin, were one word originally.)

War is the summation of man’s miseries, and you balk.

Yes, dear prejective, death is upon us. You nearly have died, once, and definitely, you and I will die, some time. But we push this fact [back?] to the fringe of our little island of existence. And we roam around on this island of our allotted time on earth as though this island was the universe. . . . Our body and soul constitute an army, in our incessant resistance against germs, storms, worms, around our epidermis. We are a victorious army, in our own right, once the embryo has made his declaration of independence, with shrieking [*sic*] voice, when he enters the womb of time, after leaving his mother’s womb.

We are all “lustrated”, made illustrious, as the Roman Emperor, marching through these gates of physical life, and have become part time gods. Our mortality is our only barrier against our being God Almighty. As long as our island of existence steadies our feet and contains our visions, we try to forget this strange condition of our divinity. We try to forget that the condition of fire is ashes.

The whole rest of the universe, the stars, may be “exanimate” bodies, corpses which life has left. In us,

life is still going on, but at the price of death.

Man could not live without death. Man is fire and ashes, both, produced in one and the same process of inspiration and expiration. We have the honor of being neither stone nor wind nor mineral, but to be alive. Dead things cannot die; we can. Dead things cannot die; we must. . . .

And if you will listen a little bit longer, a clearer picture of the whole historical process may result from our considering death. It always pays to face death frankly. . . .



Four Wells April 28, 1943 (Ltr. #8)

Dear Objecting Cynthia:

We are stuck. In the last letter, I tried to announce to you the great tale of man's dealing with his shortlivedness. The three temptations of 1.) staying in the past as though death could be masked; of 2.) living in the present as though our fortifications could keep out death; of 3.) hoping for the Messiah as though nothing as yet was more than Plato's cave.

These temptations are our constant reminders: we too, may be rejected into antiquity any time.

Against the three antiquities, three modernities invite us. In every one of them, our fleeting, passing, part-time character is asserted, even made the center of the whole order. In the Church, all souls are purified from the dross of accidental time and space. In the World, all things are purified from the emotional bias of our senses and minds. In Society, all men are purified from any inertia, isolation, selfishness, which hampers their function.

This was a kind of table of contents, not the tale itself. One might call it the scaffold on which I invited you to climb so that you may have a good foothold for inspecting the cathedral which we call the history of mankind.

Now, you more or less decline to stand on this scaffold, with me. You are not the student of history who would have to learn the art of scaffolding. You are the impatient fighter of this war. You wish to help the war effort. And, odd as it may sound, you think that it would give you more strength if you could condemn war, and wage war so that wars disappear. I hold that neither you nor I can abolish wars because we cannot abolish human freedom. Your grandchildren are just as free as you and I. All men shall be born free and equal, world without end. Since wars are no accident, but defend the growth

of higher, more integrated life against attacks by lower, less integrated life, this reaction against abuse called war will be possible in any generation. You go so far as to ask me why I did not tell you this before you joined Camp William James. In the "Dartmouth" of March 13, 1940 [*the student newspaper*], nine months before our Camp started, I had to defend myself against being a war monger, and so, there was printed this "Common Vocabulary for Teachers and Students":

Peace: a daily creation and a daily practice of our overcoming death.

Life: usually treated today as deathless. This amounts to the abolition of the law of cause and effect, for society.

War: the struggle between more integrated life and less integrated life goes on incessantly. Nature is in a state of war.

Wars happen when men relapse into a state of nature by not creating peace daily. These are my "peace terms". Obviously, nobody can hope, under these terms to eliminate the relapse into a state of war as long as man is man.

The specific form of war between [*nation*] states can of course be superseded [*sic*] in our time. It seems to become antiquated. But the "war" against which you rebel, is a more universal phenomenon. Its eternity means that any order for which nobody is willing to give his life is doomed. If wars between states are abolished, civil wars within this One Superstate will take their place. Man will not respect any order which is not made sacred by the only test we have. When people give their lives for something, they ascribed [*sic*] to this something a superselfish rank. This something may be an idol. The fact that the Nazis die for their cause, does not prove their righteousness. Nevertheless, where nobody volunteers for giving battle we do not even have so much as a cause! History is the story of real causes. This much, I had to put down, lest you conclude that you have not been dealt with honestly from the beginning.

As long as the passions of men are not brought to fruition in other forms, "war must have its way", William James wrote in his Moral Equivalent for War, 1910. You can quote him in your favor as little as myself. If I am not mistaken, you share the fate of all combatants in war. Charley Dell wrote from his airfield that in war only the most simplified



vocabulary had currency. The American ideology always has been that wars are unnecessary. In war times any fighter seems to don the racial feathers and feature. There is a mental uniform as well as a military. And you feel better if you can fight this war for the abolition of war. Since the specific geographical situation of the United States suggests that, indeed, wars between States may become unnecessary, on this soil, there is some sense in this thesis. Certainly the whole history of America contradicts your thesis.

However, I shall not criticise your attitude today. The so-called American idealism is a fact in which I myself have become involved when I landed on these shores. It produces the strange split between mind and body which prevents us from seeing that which we or our country are actually doing ourselves. The eyes focus on one panorama, when they construe the doer's proud mental picture, and quite another picture is seen by onlookers who only see what we actually do, namely fight for our bare survival.

Any split of mind and body of the idealistic type commands us to think one way and to act another.

The American promise and the American jungle always have been apart, by the particular conflict inside of every newcomer to these shores.

To live for the free exercise of our faith, and to let others live accordingly, is the desire in all of us who have landed this side of the statue of liberty. Our mental vision of our own good intentions is rooted in the genuine experience that we have left behind an Old World which quite undoubtedly is corrupt. In comparison to this old and corrupt world, we are or have become "better". And mind you, this is not an illusion. I, for instance, believe that I have become a better man, in America. Against this our physical practice is hammered into us here by Red Indians, the vast stretches of land, the climate's vehemence, the competition. And it often is cruel.

When we advertise ourselves or exploit the soil or do anything rough and tumble, it is done but not thought out. The body must do these things, but our minds do not fully participate in them. They stick to their ideals.

In this connection, the outlawry of war, is a contribution of American thinking to the universal growth of mankind, regardless of American practice. You wish to hear that we fight for the abolition of war and that this is the only possible attitude in war. This is not my philosophy. I am not an idealist. Remember my preface

on "The Future of our Era"? [*This is, perhaps, a reference to ERH's "The Future Way of Life," 1942, unpublished but available infacsimile in the Argo Books compilation, "Rosenstock-Huessy Papers," vol. I (1981).*] My mind must think that which my actual "body politicke" does. But our dispute is not even a question of my philosophy. It is a dispute over the sovereign rights of history. History must be made independent of your or mine [*sic*] philosophy. Although it is true that any student of history will have his philosophy, a good historian should not be read for his philosophy but for his history writing.

The better a historian, the more will he be required reading despite his philosophy. . . . The historian is just as remote from philosophical indoctrination or systematic objectivity as the poet. His is, it is true, a third mode. But since he seems to write prose, he is confused today, with all prose writers, as a potential scientist. Let us vindicate to the historian his independent way of life. His style is . . . radically unexchangeable against the philosopher's or the scientist's style. The scientist is at his best in numerical or algebraic equations. The historian is there where the poet is the mouthpiece of his age, the traductor and conveyor of all other ages. He is trajectory, while others may be objective or subjective.

If you could begin to see that a historian, a poet, a legislator, a scientist differ as widely as the four sentences: "there came a thunderstorm"; "let us brave the storm"; "storms shall be announced by the lighthouse keepers"; "storms result from the clash of masses of air of different temperature,"—if you could marvel over the fundamental "irreducibility" of any one of these grammatical forms into the other, your freedom towards history would be greatly advanced. Your philosophy may well run: wars shall cease, wars are wrong. Indicatives are one thing; narratives are another. For the historian, wars have always been the testing ground for any way of humanized life, religious, scientific, of forms of government, of right and progress. . . .

War expresses this certainty within the soldier that the direction of history must be protected from being made crooked by the enemy. And since he has to die some day anyway, he had better uphold this direction, first. For, if he did not, and the direction were overthrown, nothing he could do, plan, work, think, after that, in the new setup, would have any meaning or significance. He would have to live in a subhuman world which had lost the inspired direction, the irreversible direction from less life to more

life, from death to life, from beginning to end, in which he had breathed and moved all of his life.

To him, life has received the blessings of unveiled direction. And for this reason, life has become irreversible. The soldier's attitude may help to explain the "irreversible" character of human experience. Experiences of revealed direction may be lost or forgotten. The soldier who is willing to die for them, makes them irreversible. Life, then, in history, marches onwards, in an irreversible direction as long as there are people who feel a reverse as the denial of all march, all attainment so far.

The historian credits these soldiers of any war of the past with this very belief. He makes their attitude incontrovertible; friend or foe, they uphold the revealed direction. All wars, then, are religious wars! There are no others, [.] There may be blasphemous ones; this still is of a religious type. If people did not believe in revealed direction, no wars could occur ever. (Disclosed direction is just another word for "God," of course, for the god who governs us and who informs us; but we shall avoid the term)[.] And because all wars always are and have been and shall be symptoms of the religious character of man in history, all peaces must lead to a new definition of their religion, in the hearts of the survivors. A real peace must make friend and foe of the preceding war share a new religion, a faith in a direction now revealed authoritatively for both parts of the conflict. The historian's triumph consists in writing one history for friend and foe of a conflict, and thereby sealing the conflict, finally. . . .

With the legislator and the poet, the historian shares the honor that his language is not explanatory and expository, but that it moves the listener to another space and time; it transsubstantiates him substantially from an animal which can only hear see smell at a distance of feet and yards and minutes and hours to a human being who now hears names thousands of years back, sees visions centuries and thousands of miles away. Every American is taken back as a child, into Europe and Palestine, by storytelling. He lives in a world unrelated to his five senses but real to his inner men [*sic*]. The inner man then must have been shipped. And this act of transportation takes place when history is told or read. . . .

The soul needs a history which connects wars and peaces, foe and friend, which gives them a common language after their old has been sloughed off, through the war. In this sense, I have started my first chapter as the speech creating unit, the tribe.

I have selected a tribe of river nomads which does not practise war at all! Its grandeur lies in its power of filling all its members with one speech. Its miseries are caused by its lack of belligerency: it is threatened by immediate extinction. At the very moment at which I write these lines, the Yaruros may have ceased to exist. You and I may find it worth our while to immortalise them, in our history for this very reason. Here is a people unable to wage war and therefore unable to survive; yet it is a well integrated decent people which has enacted the first peace which lifts man beyond the animal, the peace in the war between the sexes, and through the passions of sex.

The history of the Yaruros is the history of innumerable tribes. Don't reject it because you object to my philosophy.

Then I may remain not abjectly yours,  
Eugen



### *The Oracle*

"ORACLE" SUGGESTS, PERHAPS, the uncanny, but in a perfectly grounded, empirical fashion Rosenstock-Huessy was often startlingly prescient. He saw deeply into the past and had a confident grasp of the mechanisms of the grinding mills of history.

Below is an example, from a lecture in May 1955, entitled "History Must be Told." At the time, the Cold War was all too hot, and the danger of a nuclear exchange all too real. Some of the rough edges of this spoken piece have been smoothed, but the words are totally unchanged, which although they were delivered more than a half-century ago, could have come from an editorial page yesterday.

"Today we have military training, and we have all kinds of wartime preparations. People take part in civilian defense, or in military defense in one way or another. And again, it has to be said that the United States of America have gotten involved into the global war. And I think if we would speak of 'the planet' and 'the globe' more often than we speak of 'the world,' the situation would become clearer to us, why the indivisible unity of the human race now has to be enforced in our colleges much more purposively.

"It is not a luxury now to insist that the Arabs and the Jews both must remain our friends. It's a very practical issue that we have to talk to the Zionists, and to talk to the Arabs about the indivisible peace in the Near East, because whether it's the Near East or the Far East, whether it's Europe or South America, the peace between men has become indivisible.

"It wasn't before. You could have a nice war in Africa, or . . . in Asia, and not only wouldn't the newspaper not report anything, we wouldn't know that it had happened. . . . We cannot say this now. There is no war which doesn't threaten the tissue, the texture, the fabric of peace in all places.

"On the planet and on the globe, the two world wars have made epoch, because now we can no longer afford to speak of the world wars, but we must begin to think of planetary peace. 'World' is an old word, and we learn that in the rhythm of mankind's life, the terms change. There have been wars of revolution, there have been wars of liberation, there have been religious wars. Now we get world war.

"And just as the national wars of the 19th century were all followed by a liberal era of free enterprise *within* a nation—high tariffs, integration of history teaching in any school of the land in the traditions of this one country—so now with the world war, we suddenly have great interest, practical interest in understanding the march of life on the whole planet, on the globe, in order to find our place inside this one great society, or this one great nucleus into which we have been led through the new inventions of science. . . ."

"The human race has become indivisible . . . ."



### *News from Asia*

OUR MAN IN HONG KONG, Prof. Wayne Cristaudo, continues to be an invaluable source of important new writing about Rosenstock-Huessy, first of all as an author himself and secondly as an impresario of conferences at the University of Hong Kong that include speakers addressing aspects of ERH's work. We can only wish that we had a comparable academic beehive in the U. S.

On February 17-18, 2010, he and Paul Caringella, from the Hoover Institution at Stanford

University, brought together twelve scholars from several countries for discussion of the theme "Philosophical and Theological Visions of History," the papers from which will be published. Caringella is a specialist in the thought of Eric Voegelin (1901-1985), who like Rosenstock-Huessy was an expansive philosopher and historian, and the purpose of the gathering was partly to draw comparisons between these two German-speaking 1930s émigrés to the U. S.

A month later, on March 17-19, Cristaudo and Caringella organized a second conference, with fifteen scholars from various institutions participating, on the topic, "Legacies of Revolution," in which the ideas of ERH also figured prominently. And we hear from Professor Cristaudo that a third conference is scheduled for Hong Kong that takes off from Rosenstock-Huessy's critique of John Dewey and Confucius.



### *News from Europe*

THE FOLLOWING WAS RECEIVED from Feico Houwelling in the Netherlands:

After intensive and fruitful discussions, members the Board of the Dutch association "Respondeo" are now preparing new proposals for activities. The April meeting is dedicated to the commemoration of Freya von Moltke. Some movies about Kreisau will be shown and Freya's role in our post-national world will be discussed. In the autumn, a meeting will be held on the concept of Reproduction in the work of Rosenstock-Huessy and the present need for Sustainability.

WE HAVE THE FOLLOWING relation from Wilmy Verhage regarding the ERH Gesellschaft based in Germany, more or less as received:

On the weekend of Palm Sunday this year we gathered for our annual meeting and congress, for the second time at the beautiful place in the woods, Haus Salem, at Bethel-Bielefeld, where Georg Müller founded our society in 1963.

For five years now our board has followed a new policy in organizing these meetings. We steer away from

academic customs and experiment with more andragogic, that is, adult, forms of learning. This year we planned a metaphoric holiday by bus to the times and places of the revolutions. We traveled in three days from Rome to St. Petersburg, focused on the technical law discovered by Rosenstock-Huessy, which he speaks of in the *Soziologie*: Every new technological invention widens the space, shortens the time, and pulverizes groups. So we (as a global society) really have to find ways to build new groups out of mere individuals, and make them capable of reproduction, and why not begin with the people present. We started our journey in remembrance of Freya von Moltke, Cynthia Harris, and Rudolf Hermeier. It has been an adventurous and playful undertaking. What we will do next year in Salem, we will discuss at our board meeting next month in Köln.

Our Weigersager Mensch project, with personal letters to Rosenstock-Huessy's works, was finished this year and is now mounted in German and Dutch on our revised web-site, managed by Lothar Mack and Marianne Hagmann in Switzerland.

We have begun to make contact with members of other societies or groups that have been established around those who, like Rosenstock-Huessy, were contributors to the journal *Die Kreatur* (1926-1930) published in Berlin, such as Rosenzweig, Wittig, and Ehrenberg, with the goal of organizing in the future a joint congress. It won't be a fast process.

In the aftermath of the re-published *Soziologie* our existence is still threatened by the publishing company, which demands twice as much money as we managed to raise in the process. Moreover, some of the donors forbid us to pay with their contributions, while on the contrary others want us to pay. To complicate matters further, some of the donors are no longer among us. We are in the process of forming a group to establish sound criteria for re-publishing and translating works by Rosenstock-Huessy in order to avoid mistakes made in the past.

We have started a project to memorialize persons, students, and friends, who acted on Rosenstock-Huessy's behalf, in and outside our Society, who are no longer with us. Friends of Rudolf Hermeier will come up with texts in his honour.

With kind regards from society to society,  
Wilmy Verhage



## Errata

LISE VAN DER MOLEN's *Guide to the Works of Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy* (Argo, 1997) is a marvel of patient scholarship and the bedrock of all future research on ERH. For that reason, it is all the more important that mis-attributions be publicized. Lise, of course, is not responsible for these errors. Those who own copies of the book should mark the following:

- a) The unpublished piece entitled "Purpose of Camp William James," 1940, 4 typed pages (on the microfilm, Reel 7, Item 340), was probably written by a student participant in the Camp. From internal evidence, it is clear that ERH was not the author. The correction should be made on pp. 20, 96, and 188 of the *Guide*.
- b) The unpublished piece entitled "Why Do Good People Suffer?" 1955, 3 typed pages (on the microfilm, Reel 9, Item 481) was clearly not written by ERH, as may be judged from internal evidence. The correction should be made on pp. 29, 127, and 192 of the *Guide*.



## Donations 2009

THE EUGEN ROSENSTOCK-HUESSY FUND wishes to recognize, and express its deepest gratitude to, those who contributed financially to its work in 2009. The Fund is totally dependent upon such donations. The list below records gifts made for any purpose in the course of the past year. Over \$56,700 was donated.

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INQUIRIES REGARDING the work of the ERH Fund should be addressed by post to Mr. Mark Huessy, ERH Fund, 88 Old Pump Road, Essex, VT 05452, or by e-mail to: [mark@erhfund.org](mailto:mark@erhfund.org). Comments on the contents of the newsletter or concerning the activities of the ERH Society should be sent directly to: [norman\\_fiering@brown.edu](mailto:norman_fiering@brown.edu) or by post to P. O. Box 603233, Providence, RI 02906.



*The Moral Equivalent of War. From William James to Camp William James and Beyond:  
Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy and the Social Representation of Truth*

A CONFERENCE AT DARTMOUTH COLLEGE Occasioned by the Centennial of the Publication of "The Moral Equivalent of War." November 12 and 13, 2010. Sponsored by the Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy Society, the Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy Fund, and the William Jewett Tucker Foundation at Dartmouth College. With generous donations from Paul Lee, Theodore Weymouth, and others. The Program for the conference and information about registration will soon be distributed.



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