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Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy's Religious Integrative Thinking

Clementina Alexandra Mihăilescu and Alina Pătru

P R E C I S

*The objective of this essay is to reveal how the intricate relation among speech, time, history, and space was successfully employed by Eugene Rosenstock-Huessy in order to promote a new type of integrative vision based on religious inclusiveness. We have chosen to focus on Rosenstock-Huessy because of his theological thinking that is marked by the presence of the Cross conceived as death and resurrection. Our basic concern is his book, *The Christian Future, or the Modern Mind Outrun*, mainly centered upon the concept of the Cross of Reality, which brought about his inclusive attitude regarding some religions from the Far East as well as Judaism.*



Religious inclusiveness, the main preoccupation of Eugene Rosenstock-Huessy (1888–1973), was one of his ways of connecting all religious views that were different from his own. For his concern with religious inclusiveness to be properly explained, some specific information including biographical data and details related to his Jewish origins will first be noted. Second, we will expand upon some specific information and details regarding his status as a sociologist, social philosopher, and philosopher of religions, as well as his connections both with the group of researchers preoccupied with “speech thinking or dialogicism”¹ and with the group of

¹For details of his life and the quotations here and in the six paragraphs that follow, see Wayne Cristaudo, “Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy,” *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Winter, 2017), ed. Edward N. Zalta; available at <https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/win2017/entries/rosenstock-huessy/>.

philosophers associated with the post-Nietzschean revival of religious thinking. Third, the body of the essay will comprise an analysis of his theological thinking, with a focus on the Cross of Reality.

Eugene Rosenstock was born in 1888 in Germany to parents, “assimilated . . . German Jews,” who greatly encouraged his “academic pursuits.” He was concerned with history and linguistics, extending his language skills through learning several modern European languages and hieroglyphics while still a teenager. He chose to be baptized at seventeen when he joined the Protestant church. His choice did not arise from any great anxiety but was due to his firm conviction that “what was stated in the Nicene Creed was manifestly obvious.”

He joined World War I as a captain in the German army and fought on the Western front, animated by his Christian Nationalist beliefs. At the end of the war he firmly pleaded for Germany’s salvation by giving up “all nationalist allegiances.” He opined that World War I was the climax of a “millennium of revolutions” that would represent the genesis of new and powerful institutional “bulwarks” meant to accomplish “the kingdom promised to the Jews and later to the human race through Christianity.”

His social philosophy, derived from his war experience, was based on his belief that suffering should be regarded as a constitutive part of human learning and that, socially speaking, truth was stamped on us “by pain and trauma.” After the war he worked as an editor of a workers’ magazine in the Daimler Benz factory. His social concerns explain his choice to be a founding member of the Academy of Labor in Frankfurt (1921) and vice chair of the World Association of Adult Educators (1928–32). With a view to fusing education with work, after having immigrated to the United States due to his anti-Nazi beliefs, he established Camp William James in Vermont (part of the Civilian Conservation Corps).

He married Margrit Huessy, whom he dearly loved, and appropriated her family name in accordance with Swedish matrimonial rules. Very relevant was his promotion as an associate professor at the Law Faculty in Leipzig in 1912 and his joining the Department of Sociology and History of German Law at the University of Breslau in 1923. After emigration he taught at Harvard University and then at Dartmouth College, where he taught social philosophy till the end of his academic career. As a social philosopher, he extensively read the biblical writers, ancient philosophers, poets, orators,

and church Fathers in their original languages, as well as being fascinated by deciphering the hieroglyphics from the walls of Egyptian temples. His extensive readings and his philosophical, social, and religious research resulted in numerous scientific contributions.²

Rosenstock-Huessy, a close acquaintance of Franz Rosenzweig, Ferdinand Ebner, and Martin Buber, was a significant proponent of “speech thinking or dialogicism,” which he regarded as not only “a descriptive act” but also “a responsive and creative act” within our social existence. He claimed that speech helps us master time and be victorious over “historical death” by establishing new paths to follow in our social life. He has also been associated with the post-Nietzschean revival of religious thinking that is characteristic of a group of philosophers that included Rosenzweig, Buber, “Karl Barth, Leo Weismantel, Hans and Rudolf Ehrenberg, Viktor von Weizsäcker, . . . Lev Shestov, Hugo Bergmann, Florens Christian Range, Nikolai Berdyaev, Margaret Susman, Werner Picht . . . and Paul Tillich.” What characterized the members of the group was their conviction that religious speech, which they considered to be nonmetaphysical, possesses “layers of experience and creativity.”

Refusing to consider himself primarily either a philosopher or a theologian, Rosenstock-Huessy would have styled himself a social philosopher. This status has led him to a consideration of the implications of embracing

² See, e.g., *Out of Revolution: Autobiography of Western Man* (New York: William Morrow & Co., 1938; repr.: London: Jarrolds, 1939; Norwich, VT: Argo Books, 1969, with introductions by Page Smith, Bastian Leenman, and Col. A. A. Hanbury Sparrow; Providence, RI: Berg Publishers, 1993, with an introduction by Harold Berman; repr.: Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013); *The Christian Future—or The Modern Mind Outrun* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons; repr.: London: S.C.M. Press, 1947, with a foreword by J. H. Oldham and a soliloquy by the author; New York: Harper & Row, 1966, with an introduction by Harold Stahmer, pp. vii–lv; repr.: Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013); *Soziologie*, vol. 1, *Die Übermacht der Räume* (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag, 1956); *Speech and Reality*, with an introduction by Clinton C. Gardner, Norwich, VT: Argo Books, 1970; repr.: Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013); *I Am an Impure Thinker*, with a foreword by W. H. Auden (Norwich, VT: Argo Books, 1970; repr.: Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013); *Multiformity of Man* (Norwich, VT: Argo Books, 1973; repr.: Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013); *The Fruit of Lips, or, Why Four Gospels?* ed. Marion Davis Battles (Pittsburgh, PA: The Pickwick Press, 1978); *The Origin of Speech*, with introduction by Harold M. Stahmer and an editor's postscript by Hans R. Huessy (Norwich, VT: Argo Books, 1981); *Practical Knowledge of the Soul*, tr. Mark Huessy and Freya von Moltke (Norwich, VT: Argo Books, 1988); the E.T. of *Angewandte Seelenkunde* (1924) and *Die Sprache des Menschengeschlechts* (1963), vol. 1 (repr.: Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock, 2013).

social philosophy, holding that his task should be one of “restoring our attunement to the potencies embedded in our speech and institutions so that we could draw upon the power of past times, in order to strengthen our openness to the promise of the future in the present.” In other words, Rosenstock-Huessy claimed that, to enjoy human freedom, humanity should rediscover its capacity to found “a new time,” a better world, a stable space with new opportunities for personal individual development and for the accomplishment of a solid sense of self by drawing upon the “weight,” the powers of the past, the concrete creations of the past—be they related to institutions or to various forms of speeches or writings. Thus, he stated his belief that humanity is “rooted in history” and that there is an inescapable relation among speech, time, and space.

Rosenstock-Huessy’s theological thinking is marked by the presence of the Cross. “*Extra crucem nulla ecclesia*,”³ was his choice of motto, paraphrasing a patristic syntagm. The theology of the Cross crosses his oeuvre and became the crux of his theological thinking. The Cross is essentially understood as death and resurrection. Through it, he revisited the primordial message of Christianity. The apostolic preaching announces precisely the death and the resurrection of Jesus Christ, regarded as the foundation of a new ontological condition, a new way of being. “At the center of the Christian creed is faith in death and resurrection. Christians believe in an end of the world, not only once but again and again. This and this alone is the power which enables us to die to our old habits and ideals, get out of our old ruts, leave our dead selves behind and take the first step into a genuine future. That is why Christianity and future are synonymous.”⁴

As the Cross means the acceptance of death and suffering and is associated with acknowledging the responsibility of moral evolution, it implies that existential evil can be transfigured into a source of new life. The Cross represents the necessary dynamism for accomplishing moral progress. Even war and revolution fall within this logic. They appear in the world to counteract excesses, since the good times have also their own sins. “For wars are an expression of the ‘too late’ of our thought, and the helpless ‘too early’ of our intuition.”⁵

³ Rosenstock-Huessy, *The Christian Future*, p. 51.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 61–62.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 233.

Peace and war together represent the Cross of Reality to which we are nailed, changing natures in a changing world. Hence, we send obsolete phases of social order to hell—war is hell—and we usher in new elements of nature, like electricity and radio, into our homes when we are at peace. Both times we act at the risk of human lives. It is not true that the Industrial Revolution did not cost lives. Peace as the struggle against nature involves risk. And the civil wars of mankind are costly in individual victims.⁶

The alternative assessment of peace and war—regarded as two different sources of spiritual gain, with different effects, yet both necessary for contouring a full personality—can also be found in the contributions of other recent thinkers of Christian inspiration. For example, we shall mention “Philosophical Journal” (*Jurnal filosofic*, 1944) written by Constantin Noica. He is one of the most significant Romanian philosophers from the second half of the twentieth century. His basic philosophical concerns are expressed in his books, “The Romanian Sense of Being” (*Sentimentul românesc al ființei*, 1978), the two-volume “Becoming into Being” (*Devenirea întru ființă*, 1981), and “Letters on the Logic of Hermes” (*Scrisori despre logica lui Hermes*, 1986). The short treatise, “Philosophical Journal,” is structured upon the opposition between the prodigal son and his brother. The human type (the prodigal son), spiritually enriched by undergoing negative experiences, is put face-to-face with his brother, the one who saves up in good times, peacefully and—up to a point—patiently. They are not idealized, nor are they consistent in the absence of one another. Noica’s interpretation of the biblical parable symbolically renders the opposition war-peace in the sense that the inner war experienced by both the prodigal son and his brother is gradually replaced by their inner peace when they acknowledge the twofold responsibility—one directed toward the father, the other directed toward each other—thus revealing the redeeming character of love based on mutual respect and understanding.

Due to its foundation on the Cross, Christianity comes to be regarded as a cosmic process. Rosenstock-Huessy wrote: “The cosmic process known as Christianity places the end at the beginning and vice-versa. The order is: nostalgia, promise, end/beginning.”⁷ The “end/beginning” opposition would

⁶ Ibid., p. 49.

⁷ Ibid., p. 47.

mean the recognition and apprehension of our human condition, clearly related to nostalgia, whereas the building of our “spiritual personality” on a new solid ground can be associated with the promise of a new beginning.

By accepting the logic of the Cross, in terms of apprehending our human boundaries and of building a new stable self by leaving behind our old habits, Christianity proves to be a religion characterized by profound realism, and we share the conviction that it could not have established itself as a religion without this realism. The scriptures are abundant in tales wherein Christ meets real people, not idealized ones, depicted in situations that seem to be taken from existentialist novels. Christ welcomes all of them and takes seriously those involved in their drama in order to elevate them to something else. It is certain that he takes them seriously as they are. The tendency of our nature subject to sin is to minimize those aspects of reality that are not to our advantage, to deceive ourselves and the ones around us in order to make our existence more comfortable. However, Christianity requires in the first place—as the ascetic writings prove so thoroughly⁸—that we should accomplish recognition of our own state in order to be able to build our spiritual personality on a solid basis.

Rosenstock-Huessy contrasted Christianity and the fundamental realistic Christian attitude, based on our apprehension through suffering of our inner limitation and our determination to improve ourselves morally, to the pagan religions of antiquity. He opined that the old religions resorted to myths, in order to mask the drama of the existence that inevitably heads toward a sterile and cyclic rotation and toward death “The only remedy the pagan knows for his sense of doom is to veil it in myths.”⁹ “A myth is a form of mental life which pretends to be deathless; its kernel is always a fixing of the mind on some transient thing which thereby is immortalized.”¹⁰ In exchange, Christianity means the courage to face reality: “Christianity, on the other hand, took the unpleasantness for granted.” “Against all deathless myths and hopeless cycles the price of a living future is to admit death in our lives and overcome it. This is the supreme gift of Christianity.”¹¹

⁸ See Dumitru Stăniloae, *Ascetica și mistica Bisericii Ortodoxe* (Bucharest: Ed. Inst. Biblic și de Misiune al BOR, 2002), p. 66.

⁹ Rosenstock-Huessy. *The Christian Future*, p. 64.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 65.

Christianity and its promotion of the idea of salvation by facing our inner limitation, by giving up our old habits, and by changing ourselves mainly results from its foundation on the Cross. It brings about the essential distinction between Christianity and other religions in the midst of which it appeared. Christianity represents a completely new ontological given. Rosenstock-Huessy's theological thinking attunes to the thinking of French Orthodox theologian and philosopher Olivier Clément, with whom he shared a common background; both converted to Christianity, were well anchored in Western culture, and remained prophets and visionaries until the end of their lives. Clément considered Christianity to be "the religion of all religions and, at the same time, the crisis of all religions. . . . Christianity stands for the profoundness itself of the human existence . . . Any situation or any reality that is profoundly experienced ends up in faith."¹² Clément's conversion to Christianity occurred after impressive spiritual seeking, as closely depicted in his autobiographical work, *L'autre soleil: quelque notes l'autobiographie spirituelle* (1975).

The same opinion was shared by the Russian Orthodox priest Alexander Schmemmann, another kindred spirit, living in America in the second half of the twentieth century. For him, Christianity was not a religion but was fundamentally more than that. "Christianity is, in a profound sense, the end of any religion," he wrote. "Religion is necessary where there exists a separating wall between God and man. But Christ, who is both God and Man, has demolished the wall between man and God. He has inaugurated a new life, not a new religion,"¹³ creatively proclaiming the "connected spirituality" between God and humankind.

Rosenstock-Huessy's attitude toward the other religions comprises the felt need for delimitation from nonpagan religious forms that are magical in their essence.¹⁴ Only in this way can one reach an authentic religiousness, which implies an openness toward the encounter with "the Living God."¹⁵ But, at the same time, he held that Christianity absorbs within its structure the values of antiquity: "Christianity proper stands between philosophy

¹² Olivier Clément, in Constantin Coman, *Ortodoxia sub presiunea istoriei* (Bucharest: Ed. Bizantină, 1995), p. 270.

¹³ Alexander Schmemmann, *Pentru viața lumii: Sacramentele și Ortodoxia* (Bucharest: Ed. Inst. Biblic și de Misiune al BOR, 2001), p. 19.

¹⁴ Rosenstock-Huessy, *The Christian Future*, p. 136.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

and the older religions: it inherits both.”¹⁶ What results is a unitary, coherent, and all-pervasive construct: “The story of salvation on earth is the advance of the singular against the plural. Salvation came into a world of many gods, many lands, many peoples. Over against each of these it sets up a singular: one God, one world, one humankind.”¹⁷

Not only the religious forms but also the central elements of life and knowledge merge in Christianity. Thus, the dynamics of life grounded in a continuous opening toward new spiritual perspectives shows us, “We can now see why man’s life must be neither linear nor spiral but crucial. The future does not stay open automatically; it has to be re-opened by your own inward death and renewal. Christianity is the power to open and to close cycles; hence it is not cyclical itself, but is able to contain many cycles and periods, spirals and lines.”¹⁸

The directions of time and space (past and future, outer and inner space) are plastically and realistically transposed in the shape of the Cross. Rosenstock-Huessy claimed:

Reality itself—not the abstract reality of physics, but the full bodied reality of human life—is cruciform. Our existence is a perpetual suffering and wrestling with conflicting forces, paradoxes, contradictions within and without. By them we are stretched and torn in opposite directions, but through them comes renewal. And these opposing directions are summed up by four which define the great space and time axes of all [human] life on earth, forming a Cross of Reality.¹⁹

To understand the Cross as such means to translate its “post-theological language,”²⁰ a necessary operation, whereas “the old words have been so abused and exhausted that Christianity can renew itself today only by nameless, unlabeled forms of common service.”²¹ The analysis of the categories of language and their capacity for conceptual expression occupies ample space within Rosenstock-Huessy’s oeuvre. The only issue to which to draw specific attention is the fact that the notion of the Cross is resignified, be-

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 116–117.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 114.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 83–84.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 166.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 165.

coming the "Cross of Reality,"²² thus acquiring nuances that bind it even more to the fundamental ontological given of each of the created realities.

Based on these considerations, Rosenstock-Huessy managed to expand his horizon, considering certain religious forms that do not originate directly from Christianity. His attitude toward some of the religions from the Far East, as well as Judaism or indigenous religions, is shaped as an inclusive one, relying precisely on the concept of the Cross of Reality. Rosenstock-Huessy also acknowledged the importance of the demand to call upon the "the great civilizations of the Orient, China and India, under the Cross too. For the Cross is not an exclusive symbol of the egoism of one group; it is the inclusive symbol of the reunification of man, and every spark of life is welcome unless it refuses to die in time. Even the primitive cultures must be included eventually."²³

People living the Cross of Reality are identified in different times and spaces, being united precisely by a common understanding of its profound implications. Rosenstock-Huessy placed Buddha and Laotse and Abraham and Jesus face-to-face, thus symbolically recreating the Cross of Reality. Each of them updates one side of the Cross, living it "to a paradoxical extreme which emancipates us from the characteristic obsessions of that front. Since only, by emptying each direction of its accidental content, they enable us to re-enter the other fronts, and thereby assure the perpetual flexibility and movement of life."²⁴

In Rosenstock-Huessy's essentialized reading, Buddha, Laotse, Abraham, and Jesus each operate a *metanoia*, a return to the direction of the Cross that is characteristic of them due to the contextual framework in which they are living. They turn their look upon the center; thus, they do not remain unilateral but transpose the Cross of Reality in their response to it. "Human life is lived . . . at the crossroads of four fronts,"²⁵ and only there it gains depth, freedom, and inner coherence. In order to obtain a peaceful cohabitation among religions the contribution of each of them is needed.

Buddha and Laotse are situated on the spatial axis of the Cross, while Abraham and Jesus are associated with the directions of time. In what follows,

²² Ibid., p. 188.

²³ Ibid., p. 174.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 175.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 170.

we shall pay attention to each of them to highlight the manner in which Rosenstock-Huessy interpreted them as being co-extensive to Christianity.

Buddha is the one who heals the excesses of outer space. Because of the caste system, of the myths focused on cosmic fights and Maya's doctrine, the Hindi person is under the terror of the outer elemental and uncontrollable universe. Buddha's solution is paradoxically born precisely from suffering, from intense, existentialist contemplation of it, up to the point at which the act of seeing dissolved the gravity of the landscape.

"But if, as Buddha teaches, we empty ourselves wholly into the object we perceive, if we focus our consciousness in absolute objectivity, nothing remains of the greedy vital urges which prompt us to exploit. In Schopenhauer's expression, we have become all eye."²⁶ By the hyperbolic accentuation of the outer evil, the psyche acquires the strength to return to essence, thus finding the path to the center of the Cross.

Buddha teaches, to think most sincerely and absolutely selflessly, think of the object at which one is looking and thus transcend instinctuality and embrace spirituality. Only by dissociating oneself from peripheral social appearances and preoccupations and by becoming "a center of being,"²⁷ an "eye" deprived of any connections with instinctual drives, can one find the path to the center of the Cross. This is the way Buddhism operates a *meta-noia*, a return to the direction of the Cross, to its center, its essence.

In Laotse's case, the Chinese society, in which he lived, confronts itself with the opposite problem: "Their life turned inward among themselves exclusively, and their trouble was not too much war but too much peace."²⁸ We therefore meet another form of terror: that of the inner universe, also materialized in social relations. "As we settle into a community, it becomes so much a part of us and we of it that our smile is like a ray falling on us from a whole solar system of cheerful social harmony. But we keep smiling at a price. The cost of incessant functioning is increased wear and tear from strain and friction. Nervous breakdown is apparently the only way modern man has of keeping from being dragged on."²⁹

Laotse's solution was "to return from functioning to non-functioning,

²⁶ Ibid., p. 177.

²⁷ Gaston Bachelard, "Poetica spațiului," *Pitești Paralela*, vol. 45 (2003), p. 242.

²⁸ Rosenstock-Huessy, *The Christian Future*, p. 178.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 179.

from importance to unimportance.”³⁰ Sinking in silence, the person becomes perceptive, able to intercept the harmonious consonances of the universe. The stability acquired is that of the wheel’s hub, and “so Tao is an effortless center of non-activity on which all things turn.”³¹ Tao operates a *metanoia*, a return to the direction of the Cross, to its center, through “non-activity,” “nonfunctioning,” and becoming inwardly focused.

Abraham is the one meant to confront himself with the relation to the past. Not just the calling to leave the Ur of the Chaldees, leaving the familiar space for the unknown, but especially the drama of sacrificing Isaac places him in a new relation with the past. “By sacrificing one’s son one, so to speak, hoped to achieve the same end of bending the gods to one’s own will, without the complications of a war. And as long as we have wars, obviously, we can understand Agamemnon. But Abraham is more difficult to grasp, for he emancipated his son’s life. By doing so, he acknowledged God as the father of all men, even of his own son.”³²

The two fundamental life events taught Abraham about exile and waiting, powerlessness, but also about absolute trust, anchored beyond the historic realities. Abraham moves “beyond any historic past and thereby transcends the ties which make natural man worship the values embodied in the mother tongue and father land beyond everything else.”³³ He reaches once again the primordial unity, that of the first statement from the Bible and the knowledge of God “as the beginnings of all beginnings.”³⁴ Abraham discovers the profound sense of a paternity that does not subjugate. Through Abraham, the position of the father acquires a new, liberating significance.

Jesus is the one who resignifies through his life on earth the position of the son and the attitude toward the future. “There still would be the arrogance and the disloyalty and the indifference of the last generation towards all the previous,”³⁵ which are healed through Jesus and our listening to him until death. “Jesus accepted the Cross of Reality,” and “thus he introduced the end of the time into the present.”³⁶

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., p. 180.

³² Ibid., p. 183.

³³ Ibid., p. 184.

³⁴ Ibid.

³⁵ Ibid., p. 188.

³⁶ Ibid.

Anticipating the last possible generations and any generation's rebellions, Jesus turned back into his own with a yardstick for all temporary movements. While the life-urge of the living always shouts: "Ote-toi que/m'y mette," "later is better," Jesus embedded all times, including his own, in one supertime, one eternal present. He made the hub, the eye, the father's and the son's attitude available in any place and at any time. And thereby the Cross of Reality was completed. We now gained full freedom towards all trends.³⁷

Jesus is thus associated not only with one of the directions of the Cross, but he becomes, at the same time, "the center of history by uniting Buddha, Laotse and Avraam around the Cross of Reality."³⁸ This is valid, since "Jesus created a historical process in which every year, every day, every present is equally immediate to God because it is equally a meeting point for all the imperfect past and perfecting future."³⁹

Here arises the double position attributed to Jesus. He is directly responsible for one of the arms of the Cross, yet he is simultaneously placed in its center. He is not just plain and simple at an equal level with the other three founders, but he exceeds them, granting coherence to the whole system. Jesus operates a *metanoia*, a return to the Cross, by embedding all times into an eternal present, by making every present a meeting point for "the imperfect past and the perfecting future."

Through the assessment of Jesus Christ's spiritual integrative status, Rosenstock-Huessy has revealed his own inclusive position with regard to his attitude toward the other religions. Religious inclusiveness is one of the ways of relating all religious realities that are different from one's own, in total opposition to religious exclusivism.

Religious exclusivism upholds the soteriological efficiency of one's own religious formula. Christian exclusivism highlights the singleness of Jesus Christ's sacrifice and its absolute importance for redemption. By virtue of this fact, exclusivism attributes soteriological chances only to those who have heard about the work of Jesus Christ and who have conscientiously adhered to Christianity. Unlike it, the pluralist relation to other religions acknowledges the soteriological capacity of all religions, by themselves.

³⁷ Ibid., p. 189.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 190.

³⁹ Ibid.

According to pluralism, any religious system from any sociocultural context is able to offer a path to redemption to its adherents.⁴⁰ Pluralism considers the effort to relate the different soteriological formulae mutually or to frame them into a unified and coherent ensemble to be beyond human powers—thus, illegitimate.

Christian religious inclusivism grants to others soteriological chances, but it strictly relates them to Christ's sacrifice. Inclusivism acknowledges the merits of other religious spaces and identifies the work of God in them. The inclusive positions are always elaborated from a theological and philosophical point of view. They live under the imperative of double justification, the one toward exclusivism (On what basis are the others integrated as well?) and the other toward pluralism (Why is the relation to Christ needed in their case, too?). The theology of the Cross offers to Rosenstock-Huessy solid grounds for his integrative thinking. As we have already shown, his considerations on religiosity do not come to a halt due to a unilateral and uncritical appreciation of the others.

The degenerated forms of the religious, encountered in the ancient religions, are strongly criticized. His critique is not directed only toward the other religions, but it turns onto itself, too. Rosenstock-Huessy spoke about "pagan elements preserved in Christianity."⁴¹ They must be removed, through a full anchoring to the Cross: "If conceiving Reality as a Cross enables us to overcome the division and fuse space-thinkers and time-speakers into one new profession, it will accomplish the penetration of the Cross into the last stronghold of paganism within our own traditions."⁴²

Christianity, as it was experienced by Rosenstock-Huessy's contemporaries, was, therefore, not a plenary one. However, he proved capable of operating with the very necessary distinction between the religious proposal of Christianity and its current manifestations, limited and sometimes altered by those who promote it.

Due to the reality of the Cross and the centration implied by it, authentic Christianity realizes a unification of several levels of reality. Rosenstock-

⁴⁰ The most important Christian theoretician of religious pluralism is John Hick. See, e.g., his *An Interpretation of Religion: Human Responses to the Transcendent* (Houndmills, U.K.: Macmillan, 1989).

⁴¹ Rosenstock-Huessy, *The Christian Future*, p. 185.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. 175.

Huessy spoke about “the innovatory unity created by marriage”;⁴³ about “unique history for the entire humanity,” requested already by Abraham’s gesture;⁴⁴ about “the unity of our age” unraveled by Christianity;⁴⁵ and about making it in such a way so that “the spirits of all ages could be contemporary with one another and to interrelate.”⁴⁶ In opposition to them, paganism is defined as “the lack of communication between the generations of mankind.”⁴⁷ “The pagan meaning of religion . . . is based on the isolation of a particular group,” whereas the Avraamite vision, inherited by Israel, invited all groups to join a messianic kingdom “where swords would become ploughshares and the lion would lie down with the lamb.”⁴⁸

Recalling Abraham’s logic of unification, Rosenstock-Huessy opined that it signified even more than the invitation of joining a messianic realm. Due to the experience related to Isaac’s sacrifice, Abraham represents “the faith of directly unifying the spirit of any generation since the beginning up to the end,”⁴⁹ both with the father’s generation and with that of the son’s. Therefore, through him, the conviction of an intimate, immediate connection between each individual human being and God is expressed. It is still Abraham who returns to “the first statement of the Bible,” thus referring to a plenary unity that is revealed inside creation, when it is related to God. “So the opening sentence of the Bible says, in effect, that despite the way in which human being has partitioned heaven and earth all things were originally created in unity.”⁵⁰ This unity becomes the future in Christianity: “heaven and earth would be one, and the serpent of group pride would have to admit it.”⁵¹

Rosenstock-Huessy had the intuition of the profound unity of several levels of reality, when they are understood from a Christian perspective. He spoke about unity at the family level, which is the basic cell of existence. The unity proposed by him is then extended to the level of the integration of

⁴³ Ibid., p. 186.

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 191.

⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 242.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 227.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 186.

⁴⁹ Ibid., p. 183.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 184.

⁵¹ Ibid., p. 186.

people into a unique messianic realm. This unity is developed not only on spatial coordinates but also on the axis of time. The result is represented by the unique history of all humankind and the unique Christian era. There is unity between the human and the divine, too, felt at an individual level by each generation. Last, but not least, Rosenstock-Huessy spoke about an initial and final unity between heaven and earth.

The five levels of unification bring into bold relief St. Maximos the Confessor, a Byzantine theologian, one of the greatest geniuses of Christianity. He is regarded as the most significant opponent of monothelite heresy. He wrote one of the most important syntheses of Christian theology of the first millennium. The most impressive presentation of his theology can be found in *The Oxford Handbook of St. Maximos the Confessor*,⁵² which points out his synthetic spirit doubled by an extraordinary analytic and speculative capacity. He also spoke about five unifications that are realized so that the entire created universe can complete its path to perfection. They are accomplished within Jesus Christ, and the human being, in turn, is called upon to accomplish them as well.

According to St. Maximos the Confessor, Christ unified the human being, mysteriously eliminating, in spirit, the difference between man and woman, by making both rely on reason, not on lust. He also merged Paradise and the inhabited world, the earth and the sky, revealing the oneness of sensitive things, and he finally merged the created world and the Creator.⁵³

The first unification is, therefore, the inner one, thus showing “a much nobler form of connecting man and woman, a relationship within their mutual logos, of their human nature.”⁵⁴ Only by relying on reason, not on lust, the premises of a healthy relationship are created. Rosenstock-Huessy's and the Maximian view on marriage hold the necessary resources to enrich each other, to enlarge their theological perspectives.

The opinions of the two thinkers about the other stages of unification also overlap. The second unification in Maximos's scheme, regarding Para-

⁵² Pauline Allen and Bronwen Neil, eds., *The Oxford Handbook of St. Maximos the Confessor* (Oxford, U.K.: Oxford University Press, 2015).

⁵³ See St. Maximos the Confessor, “Răspunsuri către Talasie,” p. 48, in *Filocalia Sfintelor nevoițe ale desăvârșirii*, tr., intro. and notes Dumitru Stăniloae, vol. 3, ed. A II a (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1999), p. 171.

⁵⁴ Lars Thunberg, *Omul și cosmosul în viziunea Sfântului Maxim Mărturisorul* (Bucharest: Editura Institutului Biblic și de Misiune al BOR, 1999), p. 77.

dise and the inhabited world, corresponds to the ideas about the messianic realm or to that of a unique Christian era proposed by Rosenstock-Huessy. For St. Maximos, “the consequential Christian attitude, extended upon all the levels of life, is the one that allows the Christians to enter the heaven of the higher spiritual communion which grants singularity to the world”⁵⁵ and which has been felt as such since the beginning of the world.

Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy has been a magnificent, transdisciplinary spirit. His integrative vision is built on a very wide basis, having a solid theological and philosophical foundation. His considerations on religious pluralism and his inclusive solution are interesting and original and, thus, worthy to be known precisely today when the world is confronted, to a large measure, with the reality of religious existence in plural frameworks.

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⁵⁵Lars Thunberg. *Antropologia teologică a Sfântului Maxim Mărturisitorul, Microcosmos și mediator* (Bucharest: Editura Sophia, 2005), p. 430.

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