

---

Charles Darwin University

## Diagnosis and salvation

### Revolution, history and Augustine in Rosenstock-Huessy and Eric Voegelin

Cristaudo, Wayne

*Published in:*  
Thesis Eleven

*DOI:*  
[10.1177/0725513613482218](https://doi.org/10.1177/0725513613482218)

Published: 01/06/2013

*Document Version*  
Peer reviewed version

[Link to publication](#)

*Citation for published version (APA):*

Cristaudo, W. (2013). Diagnosis and salvation: Revolution, history and Augustine in Rosenstock-Huessy and Eric Voegelin. *Thesis Eleven*, 116(1), 40-52. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0725513613482218>

#### General rights

Copyright and moral rights for the publications made accessible in the public portal are retained by the authors and/or other copyright owners and it is a condition of accessing publications that users recognise and abide by the legal requirements associated with these rights.

- Users may download and print one copy of any publication from the public portal for the purpose of private study or research.
- You may not further distribute the material or use it for any profit-making activity or commercial gain
- You may freely distribute the URL identifying the publication in the public portal

#### Take down policy

If you believe that this document breaches copyright please contact us providing details, and we will remove access to the work immediately and investigate your claim.

# **Diagnosis and Salvation: Revolution, History and Augustine in Rosenstock-Huessy and Eric Voegelin**

**Wayne Cristaudo**

**Chair of Politics at Charles Darwin University, Northern Territory, Australia**

[wayne.cristaudo@cdu.edu.au](mailto:wayne.cristaudo@cdu.edu.au)

This paper compares two contrary, yet not altogether uncomplimentary appropriations of Augustine's reading of history: one by Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, the other by Eric Voegelin. Through a personal journey, involving the deep friendship and inspiring dialogical provocations of Eric Voegelin's long time friend, student and personal assistant, Paul Caringella, I have returned to a pair I first addressed in print some fifteen years ago (Cristaudo: 1999). This paper, while not contradicting the earlier work, explores different aspects of their work and generally adopts a more conciliatory approach to these two marginal thinkers who have left behind astonishing works of power and profundity.

Both were émigrés from Hitler deeply conscious of the historicity of the twentieth century and attending to the subterranean currents that had led the Western world into the catastrophes that had dominated that century. Neither had the luxury of being able to wrap their insights up with the Marxian paradigm, which would have given them a greater ready-made social theoretical audience. Voegelin has often been classified, somewhat simplistically as a conservative; though in Germany his students were frequently social democrats in their political persuasion, and in North America today his academic progeny are as likely to be Democrats as Republicans. Rosenstock-Huessy is even more difficult to define politically, even if his insistence upon the importance of the family and the importance of religion within community leads him to have certain affinities with cultural conservatives, he is also (much more so than Voegelin) much more positive in his appraisals of Marx and Nietzschean (whom he tends to treat as brothers in arms addressing different dimensions of the problems of modernity [e.g. Rosenstock-Huessy, 1998 [1926/27], Vol. 1, 57-62, ]), happy to dedicate a work to the

revolutionaries (Rosenstock-Huessy, 1969, ch. 2, 16-25) for their courage in exploding worlds unworthy of survival.

Both men were also deeply sensitive to the importance of the symbolic and linguistic stock of the religious experiences of the West. And they shared a deep conviction that modern men and women are spiritually in the greatest danger, from widespread social atomization, disintegration and mechanization. Perhaps that is the one fundamental feature that united all Austro-German intellectuals whose thought was formed in the penumbra of the World Wars, irrespective of where or how they positioned themselves ideologically toward the future. The faith of a liberal progressive like John Dewey—scorned publicly by Rosenstock-Huessy in *The Christian Faith* (Rosenstock-Huessy, 1966, 42 ff., and dismissed privately by Voegelin, who commented in a letter to Francis Wilson (November 19, 1957) that Dewey was simply not worthy of philosophical refutation (Voegelin 2007, 323-324), was, for the most part, impossible. Europe had invested immense hope and faith in science, liberty, and progress, and when they had failed to stave off the Great War, they found few philosophical champions on European soil. Unlike their Austrian and German contemporaries, who frequently found themselves attracted to the ideologies of Marxism and National Socialism (among them was a close friend and coauthor of Rosenstock-Huessy's, Werner Picht, as well as his more famous Berlin colleague and acquaintance, Carl Schmitt), neither Rosenstock-Huessy nor Voegelin were in the least attracted to these ideologies. If Voegelin presented Marxism, National Socialism, and progressive liberalism as part of a common Gnostic delusion, variant components of modernity's spiritual deformation, Rosenstock-Huessy was just as convinced that they were all false idols. Both also believed that the most important truths regarding humanity's health had been expressed by Christianity. But whereas Voegelin could speak of the need to 'restore', as he put it in 'The Gospel and Culture', 'the rule of reason' (Voegelin, 1990, 212), Rosenstock-Huessy held that our experiences of speech, history, and time give us far more orientation (or, if one will, names for reasoning with) than reason itself.

Likewise, whereas Voegelin devotes a great deal of time and energy to a painstaking reading and defense of classical reason, and draws heavily upon classical philosophy to view what he calls our modern spiritual 'derailment,' Rosenstock-Huessy could barely bring himself to speak of philosophy and theology without expressing disapproval in what he saw as the exaggeration of faith in the powers of the mind. Yet Voegelin's very love of classical reason as

exhibited particularly by Plato is in large part due to what he sees as its inherent understanding of human limits and, thus also, the limits of the mind's grasp of reality. But this stress upon limits of reason, which he sees as integral to its proper deployment, only partially brings him and Rosenstock-Huessy into concord. For Rosenstock-Huessy—somewhat akin to Hayek's distrust of the overreliance on order understood as taxis, as opposed to the spontaneously induced order of catallaxy—one of the problems of classical reasoning is precisely that it is incapable of adequately drawing our limits. This is not because of any Gnostic faith on his part—indeed, he says that '[w]e can overcome the new hordes who make vitality their god only with a sword whose steel contains no alloy of Humanism or Gnostics' (Rosenstock-Huessy, 1966, 122) - but because of his faith in God's incalculable majesty. Being open to God's love means being a self that is open to the light of grace, and, through grace, what may be impossible one day might be possible at another time. And, for Rosenstock-Huessy, our temporal nature was always properly represented by Christianity. Thus he says that

the very essence of Christianity is historical—it is the story of man's salvation—so to be a Christian is to think primarily in the language of time rather than of space, as shown by the favorite biblical phrase, 'the world to come'. Christianity created true future, as we have seen. Christian other-worldliness actually consists of 'the powers of the world to come' (Heb. 6:5) breaking in upon the world as it has already come to be (Rosenstock-Huessy, 1966, 123).

It is in keeping with this emphasis upon Christianity as a process of God not only revealing Himself through time, but in humanity becoming conscious of his God-given powers *over* time, that Rosenstock-Huessy came into conflict with Karl Barth. He had been excited by the publication of Barth's *Letter to the Romans*, only to realize, on closer inspection, that it omitted what he thought was this temporal dimension that he viewed as so essential to Christianity. When challenged by Rosenstock-Huessy's somewhat blunt criticisms, Barth responded by referring to 1 Corinthians 15, asking Rosenstock-Huessy whether the 'transcendent' powers belonging to God are meant for humanity. For his part, Rosenstock-Huessy retorted:

Hasn't salvation come into the world? Hasn't God taken pity on us? Does Paul speak of the transcendent powers of new eon or of a Father who lives up there 50 million kilometers away or does he speak of the Son of God who became man. Christ became flesh, thus we live in his name which is the addressable and effable name of God. Thus has God revealed himself. Where's the transcendence in this (Rosenstock-Huessy, 1919)?

Voegelin's emphasis, on the other hand, is upon the human search for order and, indeed, he is emphatic about that order being anchored in an opening to the transcendent. Thus we find the following passage from the third volume of his magnum opus *Order and History*, which is as much a description of Voegelin's own account of man and history as a description of its classical 'account':

The field of this history is the soul of man. Man, in his knowledge of himself, does not know himself only as a world-immanent existent but also as existing in openness toward transcendental reality; but he knows himself in this openness only historically in the degree of differentiation that his experiences and their symbolization have reached. The self-understanding of man is conditioned and limited by the development of his existence toward transcendence. As a consequence, the nature of man itself as an object of metaphysical inquiry is not altogether a world-immanent object; the formation of the soul through invading transcendence is part of that 'nature' that we explore in metaphysics. When the philosopher explores the spiritual order of the soul, he explores a realm of experiences that he can appropriately describe only in the language of symbols expressing the movement of the soul toward transcendental reality and the flooding of the soul by transcendence. At the border of transcendence the language of philosophical anthropology must become the language of religious symbolization (Voegelin, 1957, 363)

In this respect, and allowing for their respective disagreements about the adequacy of what Voegelin calls the symbol of transcendence, Rosenstock-Huessy and Voegelin are at one in

their insistence upon the importance of humanity's openness to God's grace. Where they do differ, though, is that in Voegelin that openness seems to be largely of an intellectual nature; even Voegelin's choice of symbols, as opposed to Rosenstock-Huessy preference for names, suggests that the participation Voegelin is primarily talking about is one of questioning and reflecting. Of course, Voegelin's reading of transcendence is, as the above passage also indicates, intrinsically connected to history, and his alliance with Christianity is due to what he sees as the symbolic potency of the Christian grasp of man in history. It is precisely humanity's temporality that Voegelin stresses against the Gnostic stormers of heaven. Thus the very opening sentence of his minor classic *The New Science of Politics*: 'The existence of man in political science is historical existence; and a theory of politics, if it penetrates to principles, must at the same time be a theory of history (Voegelin, 1952, 1). But for him, that temporality means that we must recognize where we fall short, and it is this failure to understand our limits that is behind what Voegelin refers to by such terms as 'the magic dream', 'spiritual derailment', and the 'spiritual disease' of the Gnostic 'metastatic faith' which he sees as defining modernity. That Gnostic metastatic faith is an ideological faith. And modern ideologies are, as he realized as a young man, political religions, religions which all do away with the need for the genuine and loving God of creation and salvation. And, while retaining the core symbols of religion, they trade in the limited horizon of a temporality severed from its transcendent *telos* of the *eschaton*. A symbol that is essential to humanity's spiritual health is deformed and defaced through the substitution of the pseudo-*telos* of historical immanence, and thus what we have is a non-reality, or butchered reality, posing as the ultimate reality. Thus political religions are like a virus infecting men and women so that they lose faith in their participation in the divine ground, and put their faith in monstrously bloody schemes of violence.

Thus, to counter the mentality behind political religions or ideologies, Voegelin chooses as his epigraph to the five volumes of his magnum opus, *Order and History* a sentence from Augustine's *De Vera Religione*: 'In the study of creature one should not exercise a vain and perishing curiosity, but ascend toward what is immortal and everlasting'. And in *Order and History*, and again in contrast to the ideologies, Voegelin is presenting the great symbols of that ascent. *Order and History* is, as I am suggesting, written as a reaction to the false or delusional symbolic clusters of ideology, which is

existence in rebellion against God and man. It is the violation of the First and Tenth Commandments, if we want to use the language of Israelite order; it is the *nosos*, the disease of the spirit, if we want to use the language of Aeschylus and Plato (Voegelin, 1956, xiv).

Thus Voegelin's primary theoretical concern was with modern men and women's 'spiritual derailment', their tumult that comes from their failure to comprehend that 'God and man, world and society form a primordial community of being' (Voegelin, 1956, 1).

This failure, which for Voegelin is allied to the spread of the totalitarian ideologies of the twentieth century and the enlightenment faith which bred these monsters of excessive hope and stupidity, stands in the closest relationship to how he sees both history and his role as a political philosopher. Thus again from the Preface to the first volume of *Order and History*:

The Logos of being is the object proper of philosophical inquiry; and the search for truth concerning the order of being cannot be conducted without diagnosing the modes of existence in untruth. The truth of order has to be gained and regained in the perpetual struggle against the fall from it; and the movement toward truth starts from a man's awareness of his existence in untruth. The diagnostic and therapeutic functions are inseparable in philosophy as a form of existence. And ever since Plato, in the disorder of his time, discovered the connection, philosophical inquiry has been one of the means of establishing islands of order in the disorder of the age. (Voegelin, 1956, xiv)

As the quote illustrates, Voegelin sees himself as a diagnostician, and he is diagnosing the spiritual disease of his time. As with a doctor, the task is to bring the patient back to health. But, if I may continue with this analogy, because a patient has been made healthy does not mean that he will stave off all other diseases, including death.

What I most want to emphasize in this brief look at Voegelin's understanding of history is his idea of the struggle between order and the fall from it, along with his interest in history as an intelligible struggle 'for true order' (Voegelin, 1956, ix). Voegelin's interest in Christianity stands in the closest relationship to his belief that this struggle is interminable; and while he

identified himself primarily a philosopher, he was very aware of the limits of philosophy's efficacy. As Paul Caringella drew to my attention, he addressed this in a personal letter to Manfred Henningsen:

Nothing has come, so to speak, of classical philosophy as a socially ordering power; the radical understanding of transcendence has come through Christianity, not through the philosophers. For most people, conversion seems to go other ways than that of the actualization of the *nous*, as is shown precisely in the cases of Paul and Augustine (*Conf.* VIII), both of whom certainly had a sound philosophical schooling. . . . [A]s Book VIII of the *Confessiones* demonstrates, a very intensive phase of zetesis to the point of despair precedes one's own conversion experience. But this Augustinian zetesis experiences itself as a hopeless striving to the point of despair—and precisely because the philosophical “solutions” are perceived of as unsatisfactory (Voegelin, 2007, 600).

Voegelin sees that (Augustinian) Christianity spells out the true nature of the human predicament, by simultaneously tending to the need to break beyond the limits of our humanity, with all the suffering and injustice it entails, and by providing a Church in which its members together may become members of a “heavenly city,” while making eschatological fulfillment ever a beyond. The following passage from the *New Science of Politics* encapsulates what Voegelin considers to be his Christian view of society, as well as the anti-Christian view that originates in the very bosom of Christianity:

The soteriological truth of Christianity, then, breaks with the rhythm of existence; beyond temporal successes and reverses lies the supernatural destiny of man, the perfection through grace in the beyond. Man and mankind now have fulfillment, but it lies beyond nature. Again there is no *eidos* of history, because the eschatological supernature is not a nature in the philosophical, immanent sense. The problem of an *eidos* in history, hence, arises only when Christian transcendental fulfillment becomes immanentized. Such an immanentist hypostasis of the eschaton, however, is a theoretical fallacy. Things are not things, nor do they have essences, by arbitrary declaration. The course of history as a

whole is no object of experience; history has no eidos, because the course of history extends into the unknown future. The meaning of history, thus, is an illusion; and this illusionary eidos is created by treating a symbol of faith as if it were a proposition concerning an object of immanent experience (Voegelin, 1952, 119-20).

For Voegelin, then, Augustine's great importance was in his distinction between earthly and heavenly cities, and his dismissal of literal millenarianism. Thanks to Augustine, the conception of the Church within the structure of history became clarified: 'The Logos had become flesh in Christ; the grace of redemption had been bestowed on man; there would be no divinization of society beyond the pneumatic presence of Christ in his church (Voegelin, 1952, 109). The spiritual and temporal orders had been divided once and for all: 'In its temporal articulation it accepted the *conditio humana* without chiliastic fancies, while it heightened natural existence by the representation of spiritual destiny through the church' (Voegelin, 1952, 109).

For Voegelin, then, the great disaster for modern men and women has been that the greatest hardships of our natural existence which call out for spiritual solutions are multiplied out of all proportion by the ideological quick fixes which promise earthly redemption while delivering hell on earth. Further, Voegelin argues, that process, which has been taking place over a thousand years, gained rapid acceleration with the French Revolution. With that revolution, 'the radical wave of gnosticism was so strong that it permanently split the nation into the laicist half that based itself on the Revolution and the conservative half that tried, and tries, to salvage the Christian tradition' (Voegelin, 1952, 188).

In *From Enlightenment to Revolution*, John Hallowell's edition of outtakes from Voegelin's *History of Political Ideas*—the work Voegelin had turned his back on as he sought a more adequate grounding of the problem that gnawed at him his whole life—Voegelin provided a powerful analysis of the Enlightenment's complicity in the totalitarian ideologies of the twentieth century. And while he was convinced that behind the Enlightenment lay a far more archaic deformed symbolic 'edifice', in that work he lays out with compelling clarity the historical 'ideas' that will do so much damage.

He commences with secularized history, in which ‘transcendental universalism disintegrates under the impact of profane materials which cannot be related, however tenuously, to the course of sacred history, [so that] the universality of meaning has to degenerate into the ideal of empirical completeness’ (Voegelin, 1975, 9). This results in the dissolution of humankind into a

mass of pleasure-pain mechanisms and the One who will manipulate the mechanisms for the good of society. The nature of man, by a kind of division of labor, is distributed among masses and leaders so that only society as a whole is integral man. Moreover the operations of the legislator on the members of society substitute, as we have seen, for grace and predestination. Society has become a totally closed universe with an immanent process of salvation (Voegelin, 1975, 51.

For Voegelin, Helvétius is a critical thinker in this process of deformation. Taking Pascal’s view of the passions, an endless restlessness with a centre of nothingness which blocks out the grace of God, Helvétius devises a theory of social evolution for the happiness of the greatest number—and that happiness is to be achieved by the God-like surrogate of the legislator. With the accompanying faith in science as the accumulation of positive facts inserted into the schema of progress and revolt, Christianity becomes overthrown, but only by having its understanding of order mis-appropriated, reconfigured into a pattern that makes revolt central to the human essence. With both the French and Russian Revolutions, Voegelin’s concern is primarily the political ideas that both fuelled them and that came out of them, and which continue to erode the more stable potentials for order that he regards as present in the United States and Great Britain—countries whose revolutions were curtailed through the bulwarks of their residual Christian institutions. Although both radical revolutions are of fundamental importance in terms of his diagnosis of modernity’s sickness, and given the shift from his interest in ideas to symbols, and the emphasis upon participation in being accompanying his interpretation of the importance of symbols in man’s sense of order, Voegelin actually has very little to say about these revolutions as revolutions, especially about the more—to use a Marxist term which is not inappropriate here—‘material’ causes, the historical socio-economic forces, as opposed to the ideas, behind the revolutions.

Ultimately the value of Voegelin's work is his diagnosis of false hopes and delusions, and the insight he brings into why the Christian and classical traditions should not simply be dispensed with in favour of the modern political religions and their symbols. In particular, it is his sense of the importance of the relationship between God, man, world and society, and his fight against totalitarianism and the linkage he makes between totalitarian 'orders' and the faith of Enlightenment liberalism, that defines his interest in the political and that shapes his insights.

It is not unfair to say that Voegelin's reading of history may be classified as 'declinist': 'The corrosion of Western civilization through gnosticism is a slow process extending over a thousand years' (Voegelin, 1952 188; see also 128) —and that he is primarily wanting to reestablish a lost order, one in which faith and reason may work more powerfully because they do not take on those monstrous qualities that accompany them when they serve more Satanic or Gnostic goals.

In some important respects, Rosenstock-Huessy can be seen as a mirror image of Voegelin. While, as we have said, he wants no truck with Gnosticism, his anti-transcendent view of Christianity is closely allied to his view of the Church as engaged in a process of anthropurgy, making man like God, a term and process he finds referred to in the Athanasian creed (Rosenstock-Huessy, 1966, 108.). Not surprisingly, Rosenstock-Huessy agrees with Voegelin about Joachim having 'heralded all the social reforms and revolutions of our own millennium'. But, unlike Voegelin, this does not mean Rosenstock-Huessy thinks Joachim has departed from the Christian faith—on the contrary, he adds, 'his conception of progress beyond the Church depended by implication upon the existence of the Church, and thus his position remained Christian' (Rosenstock-Huessy, 1966, 75.) Like Voegelin, Rosenstock-Huessy also sees himself as continuing an essentially Augustinian view of politics. He too is grateful for the distinction between the terrestrial and heavenly cities, and the role of the Church in assisting the faithful on their journey to the kingdom. Yet he believes the kingdom must come, and that coming is in time. Eternity, for him, in any Platonic sense as simply beyond time, is a mistaken notion, which fails to understand that the Christian appeal is to a future kingdom that is God's promise. Redemption involves redemption of God's creation, and thus it is a redemption that can only take place in and through time. And this redemption has been taking place throughout the Christian Age. Thus Rosenstock-Huessy's enthusiastic endorsement of Burckhardt's assessment of the Greeks, which certainly highlights the tension between him and Voegelin, and also makes the

point that the Christian faith is a process of redeeming what is valuable for humankind and that its mission is incarnational.

Jacob Burckhardt never became tired of showing that Greek thinkers could not change the slightest little thing in antiquity. There was no superstition lacking; thinkers name no children. They thought of the good, the beautiful, the divine, the true as ideas, with the transformation through times and spaces of mankind. Only 1500 years later, after the word again had become flesh and the four acts of incarnation had rolled by, thus not until the Renaissance of Greek thinkers from 1500 to 1900 did the books of the Greek ‘thinkers’ live as forceful political movements. Because the word was in the position to become flesh, modern political forms were able to emerge out of Greek though (Rosenstock-Huessy, 1968, 40).<sup>1</sup>

For Rosenstock-Huessy, it is not so much the search for order that leads us to look to history. Indeed the search for order does not really concern Rosenstock-Huessy at all; order is always temporary, the Holy Spirit is a moving spirit, just as God Himself announces Himself by being always Here one step ahead. His concern with history is with the search for love. This is his Augustinianism, a connection he draws explicitly near the conclusion of his *Soziologie*:

The scores of this composition, the histories, must be paraphrased in so many editions as there are generations (*Geschlechter*) of humankind. For the composition is recomposed in each generation by those whose love overcomes a murder or a death.

So history becomes a great song, Augustine’s *Carmen Humanum*; in its every line, perhaps every tone, becomes a lived human life. As soon and as often as the lines rhyme, love has once again become stronger than death. Then from out of absurd contingencies, from adverse circumstances, from silent events of epoch-making necessities, in which a lengthy ingested illness is finally confronted,

---

<sup>1</sup>Of course Rosenstock-Huessy is well aware of the flows of Plato and Aristotle in the Christian tradition prior to the Renaissance—but here he is talking of their moving beyond the Church and its institutions.

crossfertilized (*eingekreuzt*) and consequently overcome (Rosenstock-Huessy, 1958, 759).

Thus, in contrast to Voegelin, whose search for order was originally conceived as an examination of the imperial organizations of the ancient Near East, the experiences of the Israelites, the polis, the Alexandrian empire, and the modern national states and their Gnostic underpinnings (Voegelin, 1956, x), Rosenstock-Huessy's search for the love that overcomes death leads him to analyze the tribes, empires (mostly in Egypt but also in Mesopotamia, Rome and China), the city states, the Israelites, and Christianity as the power which is able to reinvigorate and reconfigure—i.e. redeem—what is still living in each of these *forms of life*. But it also led him to argue that the Church, having unified most of Europe by the end of the first millennium, had created the social foundations for what would become a sequence of revolutions, whose effects would circulate throughout Europe and eventually the world: the investiture conflict, or what he calls the papal revolution, the Italian Revolution (or the Renaissance), the German Revolution (or Reformation), the English Revolution, and even the French Revolution and Russian Revolutions—the anti-Christianity of the latter two coming from the failures of the Catholic Church in France and the Orthodox Church in Russia to adequately respond to the 'cries to heaven' of those suffering sufficiently to want to tear down their entire social, political, and religious order and leap into a future ostensibly free from earthly misery and injustice. If Rosenstock-Huessy sets himself the task of identifying the valuable effects of what comes 'out of revolution', this does not change the fact that, no less than Voegelin, Rosenstock-Huessy sees revolutions and wars as disease (Rosenstock-Huessy, 1981, chapter 1). But, unlike Voegelin, he sees disease as a sometimes necessary condition which we must go through to achieve a fuller consciousness and activation of our powers.

Now whereas, as we have seen, history for Voegelin is primarily about the struggle between order and disorder, a struggle which, Voegelin suggests, makes it useless to speak of progress—a mundane concept that perverts the transcendent nature of the *eschaton*—for Rosenstock-Huessy progress is not a secular term but a Christian one, which is perverted if it is completely severed from its Christian roots. In a passage which simultaneously embraces what Voegelin rejects while also affirming much of Voegelin's analysis, he writes:

The idea of progress was not invented in 1789 or 1492. Jesus promised that his followers would do greater works than he had done (Jn. 14:12). The Church Fathers championed progress as the Christian view in opposition to the pagan belief in cycles of fate, with the golden age lying in the past; they proclaimed ‘the resurrection of life and love after and through suffering’, whereby God himself made progress in the hearts of the faithful . . . .

The distinctively modern idea of progress is hardly older than the eighteenth century, when men like Condorcet, in his *Les progres de l'esprit humain*, cut loose from the preceding centuries of religious continuity and set up a purely secular humanitarian ideal. The human spirit replaced the Holy Spirit. Emancipation from Christian traditions seemed at the time to promise unbounded possibilities—but the lack of guarantees for any such assumption has haunted all the secular philosophies of history from that day to this (Rosenstock-Huessy, 1966, 75-76).

Progress is not automatic—indeed, ‘[b]elief in automatic progress . . . stops progress’ (Rosenstock-Huessy, 1966, 80). Nor does it mean, for Rosenstock-Huessy, that we may not find ourselves serving time in hell. On the contrary, *Out of Revolution* was, by Rosenstock-Huessy’s own account, written out of the experience of the hell of the First World War. What he means by progress and the steps involved are spelled out by him as follows:

Progress, then, includes the following steps: 1. A certain level of common decency is accepted as ‘natural’ for some time. 2. A fall into barbarism, a suspension of all standards by one individual or group shocks us. Standards hitherto considered safe are threatened. 3. We reconsider our human state. Unable to understand such a deep fall, we try to delve deeper into the secret of our nature. We find some leak in our former conception of justice. 4. The next peace after the fall reflects a more complete insight into man’s true nature. It organizes us in such a manner that we will fall less deep next time (Rosenstock-Huessy, 1966, 82).

What Rosenstock-Huessy is saying here is that Christianity understood that man can learn from his ‘sins’. An important illustration of the point that Rosenstock-Huessy is making can be

gauged from how the trauma of the Second World War carved in humanity a greater sense of the *sinfulness* of racism. Of course, this neither prevents new sins from breaking out nor new disasters from happening. Moreover, from Rosenstock-Huessy's perspective, it is precisely when we fail to learn from our suffering that we are condemned to repeat it. He repeatedly made the point that the failure to find a proper peace, and the scapegoating of the Germans by the allies combined with the Germans' failure to move beyond their infatuation with statism and nationalism, helped create the conditions for Hitler. Rosenstock-Huessy's observation that 'resurrection has its severe laws. A wounded heart does not recover in the spiritual world without a change in the visible world' (Rosenstock-Huessy, 1966, 145), somewhat understates precisely what happened when a wounded people were simply left in their injury and resentment.

The failure or refusal to love the neighbor is explosive. And I think the importance of the significance of this failure or refusal is something that plays a far greater role in Rosenstock-Huessy's work than in Voegelin's. As in Augustine, evil, for Rosenstock-Huessy, is closely bound up with love—evil is misdirected love, failed love, and that misdirected love leaves its residues in the world. Societies and social forms become toxic or corrosive through the accretion of failed and misdirected loves. Augustine and Rosenstock-Huessy are also typically Christian in making self-love the common form of misdirected love. Thus a group or class which only serves its own interests finds itself creating toxicity around it, and eventually that toxicity will poison the whole social body. Revolutions and wars, when seen thus, are the consequences of love's failure. To be indifferent to the sufferings of others is to create hatred of an order. In his diagnosis of the total revolutions of Europe, which he argues form an historically sequential set of solutions to the various socially imposed limitations and obstacles to our neighbourliness and our realization of our own inner divine likeness, Rosenstock-Huessy pauses upon how the traumas and wounds of the past incubate and reappear with appalling ferocity to help bring down a social order.

A good example of this is his diagnosis of the French Revolution. There he writes about the failure of the University of Paris to respond to the legitimate grievances of Christian humanists and reformers, and how, through its pride in past glories, it was locked into an earlier set of needs, and names, and behaviours bound up with its privileged position as the educator of Europe. Its complicity in the slaughter of the Huguenots would be fateful for the Catholic Church—though those involved in that massacre would not know that they were digging the

grave of the Church and helping to create the non-Christian humanism that both Voegelin and Rosenstock-Huessy see as a modern curse. The response of the monarchy to the intransigence of the University of Paris was to draw the French nobility out of *les pays* and the clergy far more closely into its political orbit, and, eventually, to abandon Paris. This was to prove politically disastrous for the two estates which seemed to benefit most from this maneuver. Likewise, the broader explosions of the religious wars (which played no small role in the English Revolution) and the Thirty Years' War created the basis for modern humanism. For it was that experience that created a new class of intellectuals who no longer had any faith in traditional Christian symbols. Rosenstock-Huessy's examination of that loss of faith and the new faiths erected by the *philosophes* in France show that he is no less critical of their blindness to the history of the Church than Voegelin. Nor is he less critical of the idolatrous creations of that revolution than Voegelin, particularly nationalism and the faith in science and art with the accompanying cult of the genius and novelty. The heritage of the French Revolution is all too conspicuous today in a world in which everybody is a member of the nation state, most have the 'news' as part of their daily diet, and look to art rather than religion for spiritual nourishment. Yet, he also sees that the fallout of that Revolution was not only bad—he gives particular emphasis to the granting of political rights to the Jews, while noting that the Dreyfus affair only revealed how precarious those rights were and thus how its messianism, like all political messianisms, had to come up against the harsh limits of its own local pressures.

But most importantly, while his study of revolutions is premised upon what he sees as the indisputable fact that the great revolutions of Europe culminate in the two World Wars (the Russian Revolution, for him, being a byproduct of the First World War), he is also convinced that these wars have forced us into ever greater potential association. The consequence of the sequence of total revolutions is the enforced recognition that we inhabit one world, and this is reinforced by administrative, technological, economic and commercial, legal and political systems. These are part of the globalization process, and they have their sources in the total revolutions and World Wars. This, for Rosenstock-Huessy, is why history is a *Heilsgeschichte* and is providential—not because of any particular goodness on the part of Western men and women; on the contrary, Rosenstock-Huessy's view of man is utterly Augustinian: we are fallen creatures. But, to put it theologically, it is God's providence that weaves us into a common or universal history.

While Rosenstock-Huessy defends a *Heilsgeschichte*, at the centre of his interpretation of Christianity is the triadic interplay of suffering, sacrifice, and love. Christianity had discovered that sacrifice of the self is bound up with the recognition of death as a precondition for further life. Thus Christianity enters into the role of the victim, and instead of fleeing suffering is prepared to make of one's suffering a sacrificial gift to the future. The typical pagan move, as the work of René Girard in particular has shown, is to find a victim to be the social sacrifice. Thus the typical pagan myth (and I think ever before Girard's eyes is the pagan revival and practice of Nazism) requires a sacrifice for the restoration of peace, the end of a plague, or the cessation of a violent contagion. Christianity depicts this act as a failure to understand what God really wants: our love and the cessation of such violence. But until we realize this we endlessly repeat this interplay. In so far as we enable souls around us to rot and suffer our society and world are breeding the damage which will return as the revenge of the repressed.

If Voegelin's genius was to scrutinize how modern Western men and women have locked themselves into a deformed symbolic order, an order which promised total freedom yet only intensified their spiritual despair, Rosenstock-Huessy's was to try and show us that irrespective of what we believe, if we tap into the more archaic language and symbols of the Christian faith that formed the West, if we have but the ear to understand the speech of the Christian(ized) peoples of Europe, to talk of God's providence at work in our history is to be alert to the gifts that have been bestowed by the sacrificial suffering of earlier generations. It is also to say that in being heirs to the creations that have emerged from great suffering and sacrifice, we should not take the liberties and the pools of peace that we have for granted. We also need to be aware of the injured, wounded, and sick hearts among us, and of the dangers of squandering the peace, which is also the failure to work with the wounded among us. And now, as Rosenstock-Huessy has emphasized, the 'us' is planetary, is everywhere, and there are plenty of 'us' today whose rancor is as real as 'our' wounds, even if the Christian narrative which once expressed the faith and hope in love in the transcendence of that suffering has become less accessible to so any who dwell in the Western world.

## **Bibliography**

Cristaudo, Wayne. 1999. 'Philosophy, Christianity and Revolution in Eric Voegelin and Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy', *European Legacy*, Vol. IV/6, December 1999, pp. 58-74.

Rosenstock-Huessy, Eugen (1919) - Letter of Rosentock-Huessy to Barth of November 18, 1919, available in the Rosenstock-Huessy Archives in Bielefeld.

Rosenstock-Huessy, Eugen (1958). *Soziologie, Bd. 2, Die Vollzahl der Zeiten*, Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer Verlag.

Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, (1966 [1946]) *The Christian Future, or the Modern Mind Outrun*, New York: Harper and Row.

Rosenstock-Huessy, Eugen. (1968). *Ja und Nein, Autobiographische Fragmente aus Anlass des 80. Geburtstags des Autors im Auftrag der seinen Namen tragenden Gesellschaft*, ed. Georg Müller, Heidelberg: Verlag Lambert Schneider.

Rosenstock-Huessy, Eugen. (1969) [1938]. *Out of Revolution: Autobiography of Western Man*, with introductions by Page Smith, Bastian Leenman, and Col. A. A. Hanbury. Norwich, Vt.: Argo Books.

Rosenstock-Huessy, Eugen (1981). *The Origin of Speech*, ed. Hans R. Huessy, with an Introduction by Harold M. Stahmer. Norwich, Vermont: Argo Press.

Rosenstock-Huessy, Eugen. (1998) *Das Alter der Kirche, {1926/27}* 3 vols., new edition by Fritz Herrenbrück and Michael Gormann-Thelen, Münster: Agenda.

Voegelin, Eric. (1952) *The New Science of Politics* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Voegelin, Eric. (1956) *Israel and Revelation*, vol. 1 of *Order and History* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.

Voegelin, Eric. (1957). *Plato and Aristotle*, vol. 3 of *Order and History*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.

Voegelin, Eric. (1975) *From Enlightenment to Revolution*, ed. John H. Hallowell. Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press.

Voegelin, Eric. (1990). *Published Essays, 1966-1985*, ed. Elliz Sandoz, vol. 12 of *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press.

Voegelin, Eric. (2007) *Selected Correspondence, 1950-1984*, trans. Sandy Adler, Thomas A. Hollweck, and William Petropulos, ed. Thomas A. Hollweck, vol. 30 of *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, Columbia: University of Missouri Press.