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Words and Diagrams About Rosenstock-Huessy's Cross of Reality

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ABSTRACT: This paper is a systems theoretic examination of Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy's "cross of reality," a structure that fuses a spatial dyad of inner-outer and a temporal dyad of past-future into a space-time tetrad. This structure is compatible not only with the "human-centered" point of view that Rosenstock-Huessy favours, but also with the "world-centered" point of view inherent in science. The structure, based in his analysis of speech, is applied by him to a wide variety of individual and collective human phenomena, including language, religion, and social critique. To appropriate terminology used by physicists, the cross of reality could be viewed as Rosenstock-Huessy's "theory of everything," a framework for the social sciences and humanities that can be used to model entities, events, and processes. The cross diagrams some basic notions of systems theory. Rosenstock-Huessy's critique of science is partially shared by systems thought, and the goal he posited for sociology of understanding and alleviating human suffering can gain support from systems ideas and methods.

1 Introduction

This paper continues my study of analytical structures that are displayed in diagrams, where the diagrams express systems theoretic ideas. Here I consider a tetradic structure proposed by Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy (1888-1973), which he called the "cross of reality," shown in Figure 1(a).Figure 1(b) shows this tetrad as a cross, and displays other terms that he used for inward and outward, namely "subjective" and "objective," and for backward and forward, namely "trajective" and "prejective."

Figure 1 Cross of reality

(a) Rosenstock-Huessy (2017); (b) Chrysalis (2016)

(a)   (b)
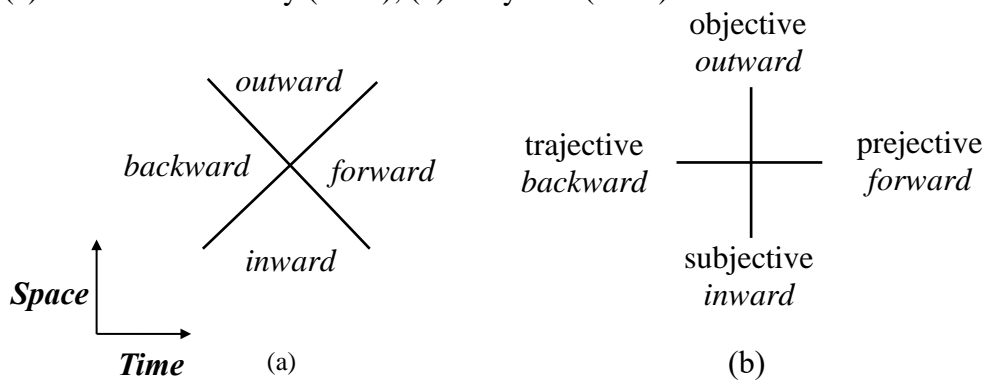
My interest in Rosenstock-Huessy's structure connects to work I've done on the relation between ideas and graphs (Zwick 2018). Graphs are mathematical structures defined by nodes and links between nodes, where nodes are entities, terms, or anything at all, and links are relations whose nature is also unspecified. Different graphs provide syntactic structures for different ideas. My ideas and graphs paper focused on a tetradic graph proposed by Bennett (1966). In earlier work (Zwick 2013), I had analysed a structure similar to Bennett's tetrad proposed by the sociologist and systems theorist, Talcott Parsons.[1] So when I encountered Rosenstock-Huessy's tetradic cross of reality I wanted to examine it as well.

My interest in the cross of reality also connects with my work (Zwick 2020) on Franz Rosenzweig's *The Star of Redemption* (2005). Rosenzweig was a Jewish-German philosopher-theologian (1886-1929) with whom Rosenstock-Huessy engaged in intensely personal religious dialog. Rosenzweig's *Star* is saturated with the symbolism of the hexadic Star of David (Pollock 2009), and Rosenzweig's use of this symbol can be productively analysed from the perspective of systems theory (Zwick 2020). Rosenstock-Huessy's *In the Cross of Reality* is saturated with the symbolism of the tetradic cross, and this paper offers a systems theoretic analysis of this structure. Rosenstock-Huessy regarded his book as a companion and complement to

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[1] A preliminary look at the cross of reality and Bennett's and Parsons' tetrads shows some interesting similarities and differences but a systematic comparison of these diagrams is beyond the scope of this study. See (Zwick 2021a), a presentation of an early version of this paper, for some other tetrads that might or might not be related to Rosenstock-Huessy's cross.

Rosenzweig's book. Rosenzweig and Rosenstock-Huessy took Jewish and Christian symbols, respectively, and gave them new interpretations that were still connected to traditional associations.[2]

Before I encountered this cross, I had used a vertical double cone diagram to depict the spatial systems dyad of structure-function, shown in Figure 2(a), and had also rotated this into a horizontal diagram, shown in Figure 2(b), to depict a temporal dyad of past-future (Zwick 2020),[3] but I had not fused these two dyads together to form a space-time tetrad, so I was very interested to discover that in his cross of reality Rosenstock-Huessy had done precisely that and had used this cross to organize wide-ranging discussions.

Figure 2 Spatial and temporal dyads
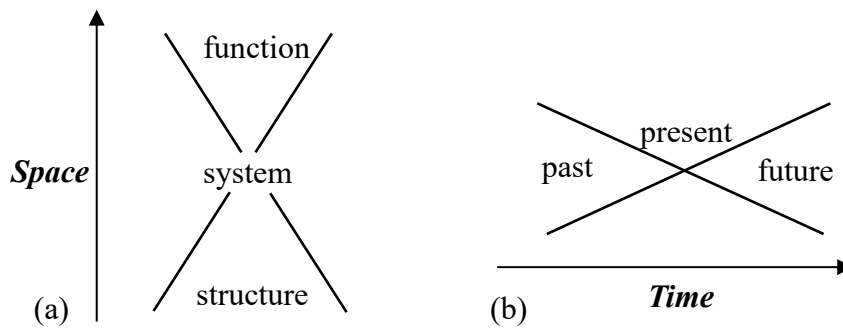
The next section presents general remarks about the cross of reality and gives examples of Rosenstock-Huessy's use of this structure. The section that follows shows the affinity of the cross of reality to systems theoretic ideas. The final section discusses Rosenstock-Huessy's attitudes towards abstraction and some points of affinity between his views and systems thought.

Finally, let me add that my papers on ideas and graphs and on Rosenzweig's star also implicitly explored a more general theme, not restricted to tetradic structures. This theme poses the question of what relationship exists between meaning expressed in words

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[2] Cristaudo (2012, 127) writes that "Rosenzweig got the very idea of coming up with a symbol for his system from Rosenstock-Huessy's 'cross of reality.'"

[3] Rosenzweig's triadic view of time, namely past-present-future, appears to differ from Rosenstock-Huessy's dyadic view, namely past-future. But the central point in the cross – or the whole cross – can be understood to represent the present, relative to which past and future are apprehended, so these two authors may not really differ on this. Rosenstock-Huessy (1993, p.14) also wrote of "the tremendous triplicity of dimensions that time contains."

and meaning represented in diagrams. What is it that can be said with words that is difficult to say with diagrams, and what is it that can be said with diagrams that is difficult to say in words? Might words and diagrams be synergistic so that using both to convey meaning is more than additive? This theme is explicit in my study of polymorphism and polysemy in Kabbalistic diagrams (Zwick 2021b). It is implicitly addressed in this paper as well.

2 The cross of reality

2.1 Four regions of experience

Rosenstock-Huessy called his tetradic structure the "cross of reality," implying that it applied everywhere. A physicist, for whom fundamental physics aims at a "theory of everything," might characterize the cross of reality as reflecting a similar aim. Rosenstock-Huessy writes (2017, 45),

> And from this Archimedean point, with its subdivision of inner and outer, backward and forward, we can launch our quest for determining the forces of reality. For every manifestation of reality may now be accounted for as an ensemble of two spaces and two times, comprising the fullness of reality.

The cross of reality can be approached from a "human-centered" or "world-centered" perspective, a terminology inspired by my reading of Rosenzweig.[4] The human-centered perspective might be called subjective or epistemological; the world-centered perspective might be called objective or ontological. Rosenstock-Huessy interprets "reality" as experience, writing, "Reality is for us whatever we can apprehend from these four regions of experience" (2017, 37), so in focusing on experience he is adopting the human-centered perspective. The word "reality," however, could be given a world-centered meaning. To most scientists, "reality" is independent of observers, although knowledge of reality obviously requires observers.[5]

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[4] Rosenzweig spoke of three elements: God, World, and Human. The polarity here between human-centeredness and world-centeredness omits the third element, God. Neither Rosenzweig nor Rosenstock-Huessy would have found this acceptable.

[5] The subjective and objective views of "reality" are expressed in German as Wirklichkeit and Realität. Rosenstock-Huessy's structure is a cross of Wirklichkeit, which encompasses Realität as one of its four components.

Aside from variability of perspective – human-centered or world-centered – in applications of the cross of reality, Rosenstock-Huessy uses this structure in different ways. In some applications, the four terms label different instances of some domain of experience. In other applications, the terms are different aspects or parts of an integral whole that are simultaneously present in that whole. The first use is a classification that views instances of this domain as independent manifestations. The second use is a mereological partition of a whole into four aspects or parts that do not stand alone but are co-dependent. This partition can be viewed as differentiating or integrating these components. If the arms of the cross in Figure 3(b) are shown as arrows, differentiation might be represented by arrows that point from the centre of the cross towards the ends of its arms, as in Figure 3(a); integration might be represented by arrows that point from the ends towards the centre, as in Figure 3(b). While an explicit notion of differentiation is not developed in Rosenstock-Huessy's writings (Leutzsch 2022), it is implicit in some of his uses of the cross.

Figure 3 Differentiation vs. integration; specialization

(a) Differentiation   (b) Integration   (c) Specialization
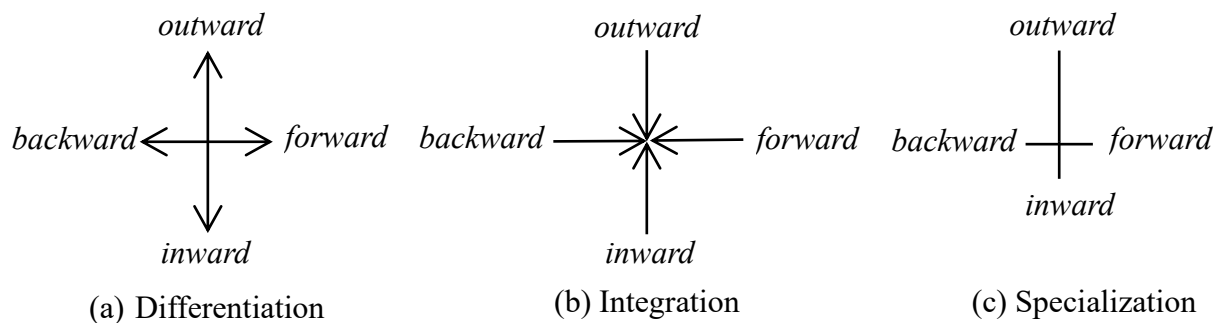
Application of the cross to some domain of experience might involve a specialization or emphasis on one or more (but not all) of the four terms; overemphasis on a single term is depicted in Figure 3(c) by one arm – in this case, "outward" – being longer than the other three. In the systems terminology of von Bertalanffy (1979), this would be the "leading part" of the structure. The prominence or availability of the four terms for action might thus be represented by the lengths of the four arms.

Rosenstock-Huessy's use of the cross is also either descriptive or normative. These uses are not completely disjoint, since normative use requires description, but descriptive use may be strictly taxonomic and thus need not also have a normative dimension. Normative uses of the cross might define an ideal or might critique a whole as having inadequate or improper differentiation or integration, as harbouring tensions

or contradictions, as being overspecialized in one or more terms,[6] or as missing a necessary circulation of focus through all the terms.

While descriptive use of the cross is epistemological when human-centered and ontological when world-centered, normative use of the cross is axiological, whether viewed as human-centered or, if one is a realist about value, as world-centered. Rosenstock-Huessy was a Christian thinker for whom considerations of value were paramount; for him, as for Levinas (1989), ethics precedes ontology; *a fortiori*, epistemology. Finally, the cross can also be understood as synchronic or diachronic. Synchronically it describes the state of affairs at some time, but this state of affairs is not simply atemporal since it includes past and future horizons. Diachronically, the cross describes a process that occurs over time in which a state of affairs, including its past and future horizons, changes.

Some examples of Rosenstock-Huessy's use of this tetrad are summarized in Table 1 which includes synchronic examples that are four-fold classifications or partitions, synchronic examples that focus on just one of the four terms, and diachronic examples. Some examples, e.g., name and word, centre in individual human experience; other examples, e.g., societal pathologies and religion founders, might be regarded as objective social science observations, and illustrate a world-centered perspective.
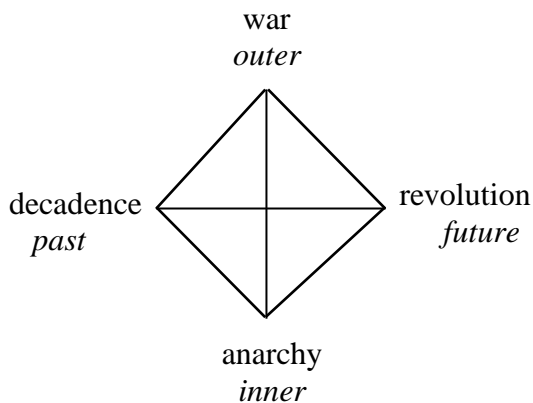
2.2 Synchronics

The first example in this table is a taxonomy of societal pathologies (Figure 4), which is a normative classification. For Rosenstock-Huessy, "In decadence, the past enervates the present; in revolution, the future attacks it; anarchy dissolves the society from within, and war destroys it from without" (Chrysalis 2016). Each pathology reflects an excessive focus on one term of the cross, schematically depicted in Figure 3(c).

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[6] Chrysalis (2016) describes the consequences of hypertrophy of a single term as follows: "What Walter Benjamin describes as 'self-alienation' (and what is hubris in that sense also) is travelling too far along only one arm of the cross of reality. Too much in any one direction of the cross of reality invokes enantiodromia [reactive movement to the opposite] and Nemesis [punishment for unwarranted excess]."

Table 1 Examples

Under *Use*, *C* = classification, *P* = partition; *D* = descriptive, *N* = normative

	Inner	**Outer**	**Past**	**Future**	*Use*
SYNCHRONICS					
Societal pathologies	anarchy	war	decadence	revolution	*CN*
Idols	metaphysics	myth	romanticism	utopianism	*CN*
Degeneracies	poor relations with nature	cultural demoralization	spiritual callousness	denial of death	*CN*
Religion founders	Lao-Tzu	Buddha	Abraham	Jesus	*CD, (PN)*
Name	self-consciousness	reifying gaze	origin	effectiveness	*PD*
Fields	art	science	law	politics	*D*
Confronting the truth	self-consciousness	standing the test	hour of destiny	responsibility	*PD*
Playful virtues	humility	admiration	awe	ambition	*CD*
Single terms					
			caste systems, science		*N*
	mob phenomena				*N*

	Future →	**Inner →**	**Past →**	**Outer**	
DIACHRONICS					
Word	subjugation	subjective communication	participant report	objective reckoning	
Genres	dramatics	lyrics	epics	analytics	
Pronouns	you	I	we	It/he	
Conversation	harkening	disclosing	narrating	systematizing	
Love & marriage	falling in love	courtship	wedding	being married	

Figure 4 Societal pathologies


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                        war
                       outer


        decadence                  revolution
          past                       future



                      anarchy
                       inner
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Rosenstock-Huessy's religious orientation was also the basis of a normative critique of contemporary society and culture. He writes (2017, xxii),

> We have to dispense with the four great modern "false idols"…the mythmaker, enraptured and seduced by the patterns of the world that invariably fall out of the strictures of science[7] [outer, i.e., objective]; the metaphysician, seduced by the pathways and workings of thought itself [inner, i.e., subjective]; the romantic, overawed by the past and its charms [past]; and the utopian [future], so convinced that the future will be free of all the burdens of the past.

Since these idolatries do not seem to be linked, this list of idols is also a classification. Each type of idolatry might also be regarded as reflecting the unbalanced development of one term of the cross. Rosenstock-Huessy expresses his critique of contemporary society also in terms of types of degeneracies. His list of degeneracies is normative, and unless the degeneracies are linked is also a classification. He writes (2017, 175),

> With this, we have a table of the four great degeneracies of reality: Weakness in our relations with nature [outer]; demoralization in cultural life [past]; callousness in our spiritual existence [inner]; and dissemblance in the face of death [future].

Rosenstock-Huessy's tetrad of the founders of religions – the fourth example in Table 1 – is noteworthy for the difference between his views and those of Rosenzweig. While Rosenzweig had room in his philosophical-theological scheme only for Judaism and Christianity, Rosenstock-Huessy was slightly more ecumenical. He writes,

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[7] Rosenstock-Huessy's characterization of science as myth-making was shared by the Marxist critical theorist Adorno, who also regarded science as a source of modern myth (Bielik-Robson 2007).

> And the human soul owes to four founders the achievement of overcoming its
> shame and fear of death, through religion, as well as its confession that the call to
> pain and death has been made and heard. Those four founders are Buddha [outer],
> Lao-tzu [inner], Abraham [past], and Jesus [future]. (2017, 176)

Taken descriptively, these tradition-founders reflect a classification. He asserts that "there are four religions possible, according to the priority given to any of these four attitudes of man" (1970, 68). But this list is also normative: he advocates integration of these traditions, and in such an imagined possibility, the contributions of these four traditions would constitute a partition. Given Rosenstock-Huessy's deep commitment to Christianity, it is remarkable that in this tetrad, he accords, in effect, equal status to Buddha, Lao-tzu, Abraham, and Jesus.[8]

Rosenstock-Huessy was very interested in speech and language, an interest he shared with Rosenzweig. Here is something he wrote about names; this is a descriptive partition:

> This name, which has ceased to be self-verifying, is retained in memory. Otherwise
> we would become speechless. Its life is mirrored in the self-consciousness of
> speakers [inner].... It is integrated into the empirical world by the reifying gaze
> [outer], which apprehends it objectively and turns it into a thing among things.
> Living experience gropes for the name's origin [past].... Its future effectiveness
> depends on personal cooperation, on the significant affirmation [future]. (7)

Additional examples related to speech/language are listed in the Diachronics section of Table 1 Speech and language constitute more than one of many domains to which Rosenstock-Huessy applied his cross. This domain was special for him because language structures experience at the individual human level and he believed that it necessarily also structures experience at the collective societal level. Language actually does more than merely structure experience, which implies a passive role for the human being; it is a mode of agency, an active instrument through which we shape ourselves and the world. The centrality of language at both the micro level of the individual and the macro level of society asserts the principle of "As below, so above." Rosenstock-Huessy writes (1970, p.64), "Politics, the arts, law, science are, in this order, thou, I, we,

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[8] However, the status of Jesus is privileged as central when the cross of reality is used to represent Christian eschatology.

he, written large," hence the list of fields in Table 1. Cristaudo refers to these fields as professions and substitutes preachers for politicians as future oriented:

> Thus, deploying the quadrilateral matrix necessary for correctly observing any social reality, he argues that our experiences will be accumulated and devolved through these spatial/temporal grammatical modules…Accordingly, the professions (lawyers, preachers, artists and scientists) are grammatical necessities [italics added], each profession accentuating an aspect of reality whose grammatical mode is the trajective, prejective, subjective and objective respectively. (2019, 70)

The list of fields/professions is descriptive, and is either a classification or a partition.

The last two entries in the Synchronics section of Table 1 are applications to realms more psychological than speech. The list of internal, external, past, and future aspects of confronting truth is a descriptive partition; the list of playful virtues is a descriptive classification.

In applications of the cross of reality, Rosenstock-Huessy does not always apply all four terms to classify or partition some domain. Sometimes he focuses on one term to characterize a phenomenon that exhibits unbalanced development of the terms of the cross, as depicted in Figure 3(c). Discussion of such phenomena is thus often normative. For example, in his extended discussion of "trajective culture," he notes that caste systems reflect an overvaluation of the past. He writes (2017, 167),

> All caste systems seek to secure for themselves the triumphs of their past— namely, sovereignty over a cultural reality deformed by their own interests. In these systems, a man can only be the bearer of the past.

A different overvaluation of the past, in his view, characterizes science in its demand for causal explanation.

> Natural science…ascribes causes to all events. Causes in their turn have underlying causes, down to electrons, etc., etc. All this research made creation, proper names, and the course of events unhappen…And when we say: Let us have science, we are implicitly saying: Trace everything back to its causes. Whoever supports this takes up the responsibility of ensuring that no one suffers injustice from thus being traced back…Science…traced the entire world back to its causes, but in the process, the last thousand years were transformed into rubble. (151-2)

Elsewhere, science is also associated with the objective term. Excessive focus on the

inner term is illustrated by his discussion of mob phenomena, in which the inner is overwhelmed.

> The modern substitute for alcohol is mob frenzy. "Dry" fanatics resort to the crowd for their excitement…But now, what a difference to the mood of a crowd. For the inner space, already recognized by us as one pole of authentic living, opens wide and is filled and flooded with this force…For a will whipped up, fanaticized, and hypnotized, can only be a shadowy imitation of the inner voluntariness of an authentic communal will. (54-58)

2.3 Diachronics

A different way that Rosenstock-Huessy used his cross of reality is to represent the stages of a temporal process. The first three Diachronic examples from Table 1 involve applications to the individual word and its source and impact in conversation, to genres of speech (and writing), and to pronouns, all of which mark the sequence of stages in interpersonal dialog. Rosenstock-Huessy writes,

> *Word*: A word, after all, makes its impact on the world by subjugating a soul for its preject [future], coercing it to communicate subjectively [inner], enforcing a trajective report [past] from all participants in those elaborations, and finally facilitating an objective reckoning [outer] that everyone can share (2017,122).

> *Genres*: These three phases of speech—dramatics [future], lyrics [inner], epics [past] —have been known to all men always as indispensable and as normal. The fourth phase, analytics [outer], is indispensable too, but the men of antiquity denied that it was normal. On the other hand, our times have declared that the first three phases were dispensable, and that the fourth phase was both normal and imperative (1970, 58).

> *Pronouns*: Our experience is anchored in grammatical laws: First comes You, so that you may attend; then I, so that we may converse; thereafter We, when we elaborate what we have met and seen; and finally It, for then it is clear what it all means to us. (2017, 121)

The first passage above is a human-centered account of interpersonal dialog and is an example of a partition that is descriptive. The second passage which lists genres of speech and writing might be considered a synchronic classification, but these genres are presented as having a natural progression, so this is included in Table 1 as a diachronics

example. The list of genres is a world-centered classification with a normative message: Rosenstock-Huessy is critical of the hegemony of analytics over dramatics, lyrics, and epics. This hegemony is an example of the distortion depicted in Figure 3(c). He writes,

> The fourth phase of speech is the spirit's death…Of course it has never flourished before, as only we have made a cult of the abstract, of phase four. We have inserted death into all cycles of inspiration. Generalizations have become our gods. They are abstract (1970, 58)
> .
> Act IV in the drama of our creative convulsion: the dead objectivity of a process being contemplated from the outside (2017, 177).

The third passage focuses on grammar, and is a human centered phenomenology of pronouns. To use Buber's (1937) terminology, it moves from an I-Thou relationship [you] through two intermediate stages [I, then we] to a final I-It relationship [it or he].

All three diachronic examples have the same sequence of terms: future-inner-past-outer (FIPO). This is Rosenstock-Huessy's canonical sequence of stages modelled by his cross of reality. The sequence is shown by the three solid arrows of Figure 5.

Figure 5 Rosenstock-Huessy's canonical temporal sequence
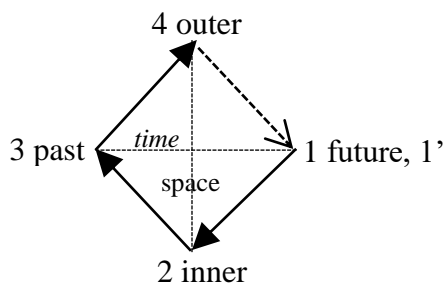
About this sequence, Rosenstock-Huessy writes (1970, 55),

> The event which is expressed can only be expressed in four phases. And the event has not happened, has not eventuated at all unless it has mobilized all the four phasic responses. Not only must the experience pass through these four distinguishable phases, aspects or modes, but also the sequence of these modes is fixed... as follows (terms in brackets added):
> 1. Fiativum [prejective]
> 2. Subjectivum [subjective]
> 3. Perfectum [trajective]
> 4. Abstractum [objective]

…For the experiencing specimen is (1) prejected in the fiativum into the unknown. He is (2) subjected to the uncertain-ties of suspense while he sighs, sings, swears and undergoes the pressures of the agenda in process. He (3) is trajected over the river of time whenever he can report back "order fulfilled": we have done it. He (4) is object of his own analysis after it is all over and he has been dismissed from the exigencies of the situation. Then the object, the event, is a mere "it."

1. Preject [future]

2. Subject [inner]

3. Traject [past]

4. Object [outer]

The fourth phase opens up the possibility of the initiation of a new event, as shown by the dashed arrow of Figure 5, which represents a transition from phase 4 to a new phase 1′, completing a cycle. He writes (59),

If phase four did not abstract us from our spells, freedom could not exist to start a new phase. In phase four we expire one act of faith so that we may be inspired again.

Table 1 lists two additional examples that have the same FIPO sequence. The fourth example in the table, conversation, resembles the pronoun example that is above it in the table. Rosenstock-Huessy writes (2017, 121),

In any speech, therefore, we distinguish four consecutive situations, although the vocative always has to come first if we wish to speak effectively. In the first situation, someone hears himself called by name. In the second, he informs someone else about his name. In the third, we report the things that happened to us, or were done to us, as bearers of our name. We inform, relate, and determine a history. Finally, we cast a panoramic glance over all of it and draw conclusions and comparisons. We establish a logical system. We analyse. Harkening, disclosing, narrating, and systematizing are the four grammatical forms.

In the fifth example in the table (love & marriage) Rosenstock-Huessy surveys the sequence of situations that he says every man

…experiences when he: 1. Falls in love prejectedly: Love me! 2. Courts and is lyrical—subjectively. 3. Stands at the altar: we have done it, we have come across. 4. Introduces her to the first stranger as "my wife," objectively. In a closer analysis of the four phases, many more serious processes receive their place. (1970, p.56)

3 Affinity to systems theory

3.1 Space: structure-function

A "system" is a set of elements and a set of relations between the elements (Hall and Fagen 1956). This simple definition explicitly captures the first of two core ideas inherent in the notion of "system," namely "order": a system is an ordered unity as opposed to a disordered aggregate. This definition, applied recursively so the system is viewed as an element in a larger order, implicitly captures also the second idea, namely "distinction": a system is distinct from the environment in which it is embedded, where the environment is also ordered in some way, and the system participates in that order.

These notions of order and distinction lead to the structure-function dyad often used to characterize a system. Order can be (implicitly) represented by the double-cone diagram of Figure 6(a), where the vertex is the interface between internal order (structure) and participation in external order (function). (Here, "function" does not necessarily mean "purpose.")

Figure 6 Spatial double-cone diagram of system; the system-environment dyad

(a) Order   (b) Distinction
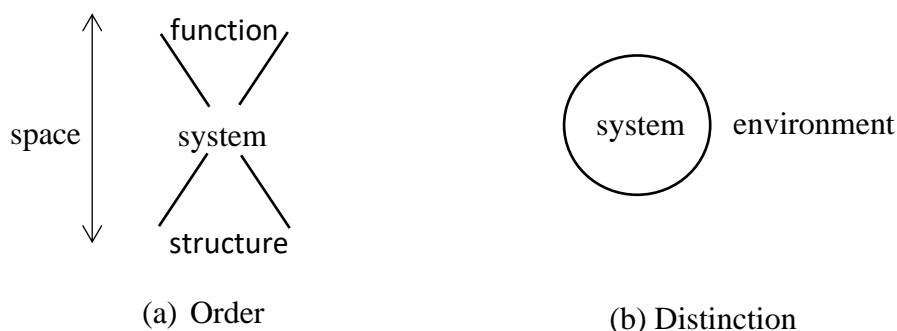
The vertex is labeled "system" to indicate that the system is a union of structure and function; the vertex is the system's "centre of gravity," as it were. More precisely, the system is the double-cone, or at least the vertex plus adjacent parts of lower and upper cones. Distinction is represented in Figure 6(b) by the circular boundary separating system and environment; in Figure 6(a), the vertex plays the role of this boundary. Both of these system representations are spatial and synchronic. Although Rosenstock-Huessy did not use the language of system vs. environment, seeing his inner-outer dyad as very similar to the system-environment dyad is a plausible interpretation of his meaning (Leutzsch 2022).

In Figure 6(a), structure and function are shown as cones that expand downward and upward because the definition of "system" is recursive and open-ended. The elements of the system organized by its relations are themselves systems, namely sub-systems that include sub-elements organized by sub-relations and so on. So as one descends to lower levels of organization, structure expands. Being recursive also means that the system as a whole is an element, namely a supra-element, organized in the environment by supra-relations and so on. So function also expands as one ascends to higher levels of organization. As one moves away from the vertex of the double cone, relevance of the cones to the system diminishes. One might invoke a spatial discount factor that gives less weight to the distant inside or outside. In the more definitively spatial representation of Figure 6(b), only the environment is visibly open-ended.

The relation between structure and function is simple if there are direct interactions between elements of the system and elements of the environment. But more commonly what the environment encounters are emergent attributes of the system as a unitary whole, attributes that are only indirectly and obscurely related to its internal elements and relations and perhaps also dependent on environmental conditions. Function both partially conceals and partially reveals structure. What is revealed may be novelty implicit in and emergent from structure and afforded (made possible) by the environment.

3.2 Time: past-future

The vertical double-cone diagram of Figure 6(a) is spatial, but one can rotate the diagram clockwise 90° to obtain a horizontal diagram, as shown in Figure 7, that is temporal and models an event. An event, as a temporal unity, is an analogue of a system as a spatial unity, and this diagram can also model the event of system formation, which is never *ex nihilo*. Antecedents of the event, its past, correspond to structure; succedents of the event, its future, correspond to function.

Figure 7 Temporal double-cone diagram of event
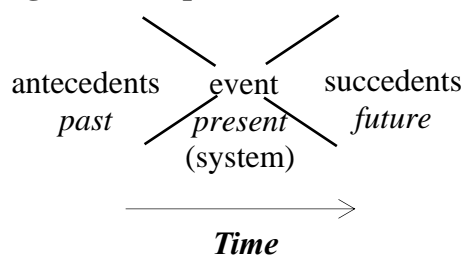
The cone of antecedents expands to the left since immediate causes of the event have prior causes and so on. The cone of succedents expands to the right since immediate consequences of the event have subsequent consequences and so on. But as in the vertical structure-function diagram, as one moves away from the vertex of this horizontal double cone the relevance of these cones to the event diminishes. One might invoke a temporal discount factor applied to events far from the present.

The vertex of the horizontal double-cone, the event as a unity, corresponds to the vertex of the vertical double-cone of Figure 6(a), labeled "system." One could broaden the notion of "system" so that it is not only spatial but also temporal, so the vertex of Figure 7 can also be labeled "system." The inclusion of time in the notion of "system" as applied to living systems, and specifically the extension of time beyond the present into both past and future, was advocated by Smuts (1936) in his exposition of holism.

The temporal notion of system also has the ideas of order, distinction, open-endedness, and emergence as conceptual components. The salience of these ideas in talking about events is recognized outside the systems community as well, and has been expressed by Koselleck as follows:

> Thus, for the meaning of historical sequence, there is a threshold of fragmentation below which an event dissolves into unrelated incidents. A minimum of "before" and "after" constitutes the significant unity that makes an event out of incidents. The content of an event, its before and after, might be extended; its consistency, however, is rooted in temporal sequence. (2004, 106)

> Every event produces more and at the same time less than is contained in its pre-given elements: hence its permanently surprising novelty. (110)

Koselleck's "threshold of fragmentation," i.e., absence of unity below which an event is merely a "heap" of incidents, expresses the idea of order, applied temporally. The "before" and "after" is the temporal system as distinction, which corresponds to the system-environment boundary. The content of this "before" and "after" is extended and open-ended as depicted by the double cone. Koselleck's "horizon of expectations" is the diverging cone of the future, and since the past is actually also never fully disclosed in the present, it too has a horizon. The vertex of the horizontal double cone conceals and reveals different aspects of the past in the future. Some of the past has no significant effect on the future and is thus isolated from it, just as some aspects of structure have no impact on function, but some of the past not only impacts the future but creatively gives

rise to novelty. The future is not fully decidable from the past, just as function is not fully decidable from structure, so temporal emergence resembles spatial emergence. A focus on emergence groups the terms of the cross in two pairs: each term in the outer-future dyad emerges from its opposite in the inner-past dyad.

3.3 Putting space and time together

It should be apparent that the antecedents-succedents dyad of Figure 7 is identical to Rosenstock-Huessy's past-future temporal dyad. If one uses the terminology of past and future and fuses the vertical-spatial double-cone diagram and the horizontal-temporal double-cone diagram, the result is Figure 8(a). Replacing the pair of double-cones with a single cross that subsumes both double-cones, one obtains Figure 8(b), which is the cross of reality. Both Figure 8(a) and Figure 8(b) can be considered to have "system" at its centre, the central point representing the unity of structure and function (inner and outer) and past and future. The inner-outer (system-environment) dyad is inherent in systems thought; if "system" is not only spatial but as "event" is also temporal, the past-future dyad is also inherent.

**Figure 8 Fusing the space and time double-cone diagrams**
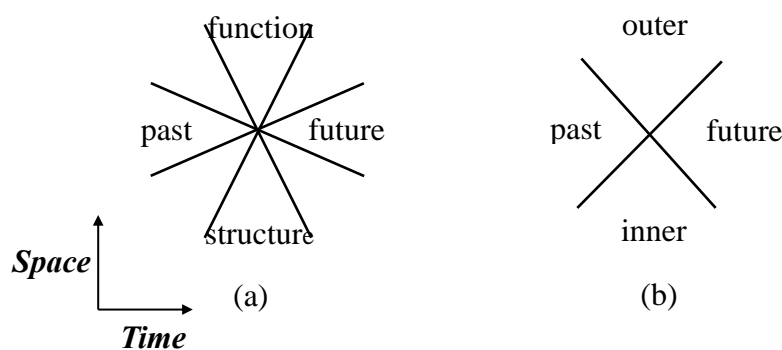
A system is thus Janus-faced in space and time: it faces inwards and outwards, and towards future and past. Rosenstock-Huessy's spatial and temporal dyads accord with the systems orientation which, while world-centered, is also perspectival, offering a view from any system rather than an absolute "view from nowhere" (Nagel 1986).

Leithart (2015) calls Rosenstock-Huessy a "philosopher of the event," arguing that he is "as much a thinker of the Event as Badiou, but he is able to explain how Eventful disruptions leave their mark in ordinary life" (62). Leithart also notes the connection, for Rosenstock-Huessy, of events with speech: "Past and future are divided from each other by events, and, importantly, our talk about events" (64).

3.4 Process

The temporal aspect of the cross of reality (Figure 7) shows a system as open-ended towards both past and future, as concentration of the past and expansion into the future. Concentration of the past generates the system (event), which expands into the future by launching a process. At some point after system formation, expansion may reverse into concentration,[9] leading to a new system (event) that completes the process, and possibly initiates a new process. Such process initiation and completion can be modelled with two horizontal double-cones joined together, where the stages of the process are specified by the diachronic version (Figure 5) of Rosenstock-Huessy's cross of reality, now interpreted as being about process rather than event. This is shown in Figure 9

Figure 9 Diachronics of process

(a)   (b)
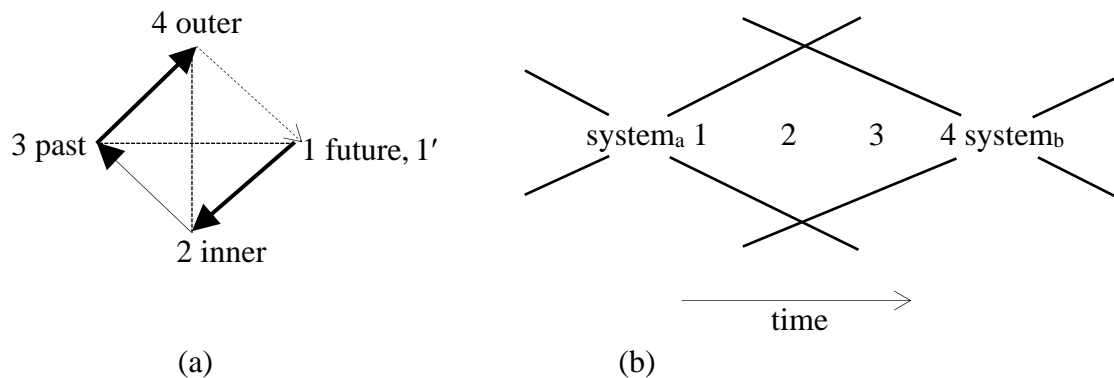
In step 1 of the process, formation of a $system_a$ (event) launches a future-oriented process that unfolds in time. As shown in Figure 9(b), step 1 is not $system_a$ formation per se, but immediately follows it and establishes its character. In step 2, the process undergoes internal development. The future-inner dyad is thus a phase of expansion. In the transition from step 2 to step 3 (via the lighter arrow in Figure 9(a)), expansion changes into concentration. In step 3, as $system_b$ is approached, converging phenomena organize past results of development. In step 4, the process is objectively completed. The past-outer dyad is a phase of concentration. Again, step 4 is not $system_b$ formation per se, but immediately precedes it. Completion opens up the possibility, shown in Figure 9(a) as a dashed line, of a new process where 4 gives rise to 1′. For

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[9] In Chinese philosophy, expansion is yang and concentration is yin; as Zhou Dunyi (Wang 2005) asserts, "Heaven uses yang to produce the myriad things and uses yin to complete the myriad things."

Rosenstock-Huessy, completion and re-initiation require that a process end with the objective term in which the potential inherent in step 1 is realized and instantiated.

The cross viewed this way is more general than a model of interpersonal dialog or speech thinking; this makes it an interesting systems theoretic structure. The structure unites at least three different ideas. In the diachronics of process (Figure 9), the cross of reality is divided into a future-inner dyad, a phase of expansion, and a past-outer dyad, a phase of concentration. Earlier, in the discussion of emergence, the cross was divided into a different pair of dyads: an outer-future dyad each of whose terms emerges from its opposite term in the inner-past dyad. And the cross is of course divided into the temporal dyad of past-future, and the spatial dyad of inner-outer. These three divisions exhaust all possible decompositions of the four terms into two pairs. These divisions and their meanings are shown in Figure 10 which illustrates how graphs can provide syntactic structures for additional ideas beyond the ideas of differentiation, integration, and leading parts visualized in Figure 3

Figure 10 Three divisions of the cross into two pairs of terms

(a) diachronics, (b) emergence, (c) dimensions
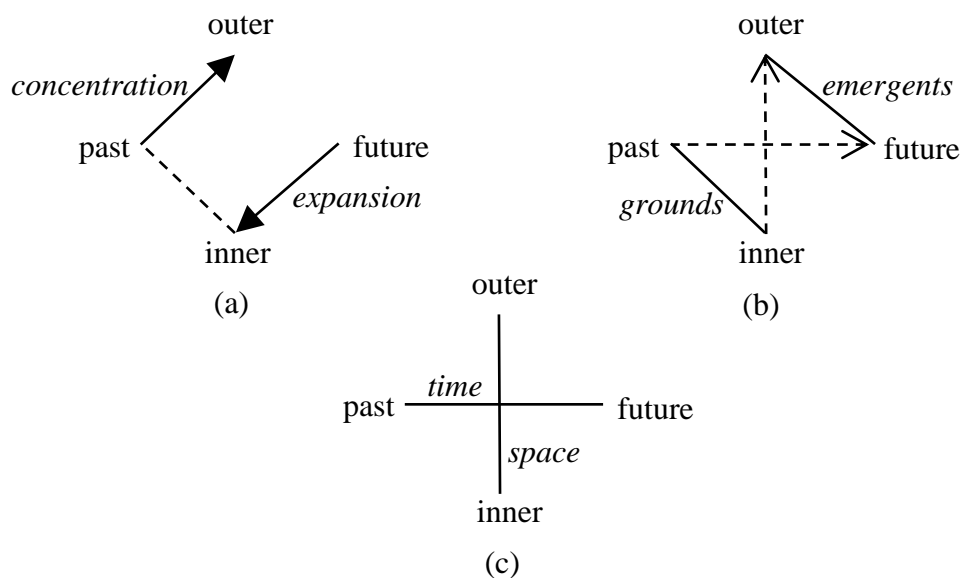
That the cross of reality can be used both synchronically and diachronically is an attractive feature of this structure. From a systems theoretic perspective this dual usefulness is not unusual. For example, graph representations of systems have such dual uses. So does the notion of "relation," defined set- or information-theoretically.

4 Discussion

4.1 The abstract and objective

This paper examines relationships of some aspects of the cross of reality to systems theory. The cross is a simple and flexible framework of analysis that reflects some fundamental aspects of reality viewed by Rosenstock-Huessy primarily from a human-centered perspective. That the cross also diagrams some basic systems ideas that reflect a world-centered perspective is not surprising since to be able to address "every manifestation of reality" (2017, 45) a conception must be systems theoretic in at least some sense. The cross diagrams only a very few systems ideas, so its systems character should not be overstated. It does not say anything about feedback or feedforward, dynamic systems, networks, thermodynamics, and so on. But it does reflect a systems perspective and its dual synchronic-diachronic use is interesting.

Systems theory is transdisciplinary. Rosenstock-Huessy's work was also transdisciplinary. He applied his ideas not only to language, religion, and social criticism, but to numerous other domains of human experience, such as social events, the workplace, and the army. He saw himself as a sociologist, though his friend Rosenzweig saw him as a philosopher. His interests were wide-ranging, and beyond his four-fold scheme, his general mode of thought, seeing manifestations of the four terms of space and time in diverse phenomena, identifies him as a kind of systems thinker. Unsurprisingly, this mode of thought did not meet with approval.[10]

Rosenstock-Huessy is not commonly regarded as a systematic thinker, but being systematic and being systems-theoretic are not the same. Despite being an associative thinker, Rosenstock-Huessy's thought has, in part, an underlying abstract character, since any conception that is transdisciplinary will necessarily be abstract. He would have been surprised to hear this said of his work since he condemned abstraction. He

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[10] He writes, "I have survived decades of study and teaching in scholastic and academic sciences. Every one of their venerable scholars mistook me for the intellectual type which he most despised. The atheist wanted me to disappear into Divinity, the theologians into sociology, the sociologists into history, the historians into journalism, the journalists into metaphysics, the philosophers into law, and—need I say it?—the lawyers into hell, which as a member of our present world, I never had left" (1969, 758). This poignant lament will resonate with the experience of most systems theorists.

wrote "The man of faith does not abstract" (2017, 133). Cristaudo summarizes his negative attitude on abstraction in mild words by noting that "No one can…pretend to live exclusively amid abstract concepts and mathematical formulas" (2017, p.xxi), and in more forceful words as follows: "…few of the more philosophically-minded survivors of the Great War [World War I] failed to make the connection between great abstractions and mass carnage" (2017, xxi).

Rosenstock-Huessy's rejection of abstraction, however, is not without qualification. He admits the value of abstraction as liberating us from our "spells, [providing the] freedom…to start a new phase" (1970, 59). Abstraction thus brings not only a kind of "death" but also a kind of freedom. What appears to be a bias in his writings against the outer term of the cross perhaps only reflects his insistence that this one term should not overwhelm the other three terms; hence his comment on genres of speech where he criticized the modern dominance of analytics over dramatics, lyrics, and epics. Nonetheless his predominant view of abstraction is negative. Rosenstock-Huessy's view that an abstraction is "dead" fails to recognize the abstract character of his own thought. His application of the cross to many different phenomena demonstrates a creativity very much alive in the symbolism of his cross that depends precisely on its abstractness.

Rosenstock-Huessy also disdained science because he regarded its focus on causality as obsession with the past and because he preferred the subjective over the objective. The approach adopted in this paper towards the cross of reality is thus one of which he might not have approved, since this approach is unapologetically abstract, analytical, and grounded in the natural. Indeed, this approach privileges the outer term of the cross, which of the four terms of the cross was for Rosenstock-Huessy the least favoured.

Beyond preferring the subjective over the objective as individual terms, he appears also to have had preferences among pairings of terms. He favours future and inner over past and outer, the expansive phase of process over its contractive phase (this partition of the cross was shown in Figure 10(a)). A plausible case can be made that he also favours the past-future temporal dyad over the inner-outer spatial dyad (this partition was shown in Figure 10(c)). He writes (1993, 747),

> This dualism that permeates every perfect member of the civilized world may be summed up by two words that fittingly should supersede the misleading 'objectivity' and 'subjectivity' so dear to the natural scientists. The new terms are

> 'traject', i.e., he who is for- warded on ways known from the past, and 'preject',
> i.e., he who is thrown out of this rut into an unknown future.

On the privileging of time, Leutzsch notes (2015, 50),

> After the shock of the World War, time and speech were at the very heart of
> Rosenstock-Huessy's Denkstil. Now he tended to link the predominance of spatial
> thinking with geopolitics, objectivity and positivism in his critique of modern
> academia.

This favouring of time over space is also suggested by the criticism implicit in the book
title "The Hegemony of Spaces," in Rosenstock-Huessy's correlation of time and space
with church and state, in his assignment of Christianity and Judaism to future and past
while Buddhism and Taoism, assigned to inner and outer, respectively, are said to be
"without time" (2017, 178), and in his assertion that "Sociology will remain bad
philosophy as long as it confers precedence on spaces instead of times" (2017, 254). In
web exchanges on this issue (Chrysalis 2019), a commentator argues that "Rosenstock-
Huessy's innovation recognizes the shift in accent or emphasis from space to time." The
website author disagrees, and insists that Rosenstock-Huessy advocates "integration of
space and time." A second commentator defends the first, noting that Rosenstock-
Huessy refers to himself as a 'time-thinker.' Both the website author and the
commentators are correct. The cross of reality implies the need to integrate time and
space; nonetheless, Rosenstock-Huessy's personal leaning is towards time, at least in
part as a necessary corrective to the hegemony of spaces.

4.2 Science, systems theory

Rosenstock-Huessy associates science with the past and objective terms of the cross,
and both associations are largely negative. This is not altogether surprising since
Rosenstock-Huessy had some anti-modern conservative attitudes (Leutzsch 2015). It is
not clear why he did not associate science also with the future term of the cross since
science aims at prediction as the only way to establish causation, which he associates
with the past. He might also have associated science with the inner term, since his
criticism of causation in science is not only that it is a reductionism that seeks
explanation in earlier events, but also that it is a reductionism that seeks explanation in
smaller internal components.

One can imagine Rosenstock-Huessy also objecting to the use of diagrams widely prevalent in science and more specifically in systems theory as yet another example of preference for the spatial over the temporal, which also manifests in preference for the written word over the spoken word. But diagrams, while spatial, are really neutral in the competition between writing and speech: they can accompany and augment the spoken word as they can the written word. Diagram thinking integrates space and time and is a complement to speech thinking.

Since systems theory is a project within science, Rosenstock-Huessy's negative views about science might be considered to extend to this project. Or perhaps not, since systems theory's critique of mainstream science resembles his critique. When he says that interpretation of events in terms of causes makes events "unhappen" one might understand this as objecting to the absence in conventional scientific explanation of adequate recognition of emergence and to the reductionist tendency of viewing macro phenomena as epiphenomena.[11] Systems theory raises similar objections. Rosenstock-Huessy is probably also calling attention to the fact that mainstream science doesn't adequately recognize the salience of uniqueness in the human world. An interest in uniqueness is as well a distinct facet of systems theory's focus on complexity.

There is yet another way that Rosenstock-Huessy's orientation is not that far from that of systems theory. He writes about his cross the following (2013, 52):

> When we look at the four statements once more, they show man in a very obvious situation, and of any living organism within a living universe. Whenever we speak, we assert our being alive because we occupy a centre from which the eye looks backwards, forward, inward, and outward. To speak means to be placed in the centre of the cross of reality

This agrees not only with the perspectivalism inherent in the idea of "system," but also with the focus of systems theory on phenomena of life. The human-centered perspective that Rosenstock-Huessy favours could even be considered to be a special case of a

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[11] One might argue that Rosenstock-Huessy's speech thinking is reductionist because it draws conclusions about the macro social order from the fact that social systems are composed of human beings whose primary interactions are linguistic. But, to use the distinction made by Saussure (Chandler 2002), *langue* (language) is indeed a macro phenomenon and its correlation with *parole* (speech), language as employed by individuals, is not reductionist.

world-centered view anchored in the perspective of the organism.

Rosenstock-Huessy might also have had a more favourable attitude towards the abstract, analytic, and objective, especially as these manifest in systems thinking, if he had realized that this mode of understanding is of value not only for intellectual projects that are descriptive but also for normative projects that critique social phenomena. Systems theory is a rich source of ideas about how systems fail or are dysfunctional and thus cause human suffering. While it was common to criticize – whether fairly or not – the systems-oriented sociologist Talcott Parsons as being biased towards an assumption of functionality, the later thought of the systems-oriented sociologist Niklas Luhmann clearly emphasizes and explores dysfunctionality. More generally, the use of systems theory for purposes of critique can be considered an attempt to construct an "ontology of problems" or a "secular theodicy" that conceptualized moral evil as a special case of natural evil which was a special case of metaphysical evil (Zwick 1995, 2008). The systems theorist Troncale (2011, 2014) has also been developing a theory of "systems pathologies" along these lines. Rosenstock-Huessy had similar aims in his development and application of the cross of reality. His use of the cross to describe societal pathologies, idols, degeneracies (listed in Table 1) and other imperfections that cause human suffering, while grounded in his Christian values and his ethical conception of the task of the discipline of sociology, fits in well with the systems project of constructing an ontology of problems. That said, he would surely have insisted on a theistic understanding of metaphysical evil.

The systems literature has often touched upon religious themes. One of the major systems thinkers in political science, Karl Deutsch (1956), speaks of faith, love, and spirit using cybernetic ideas. For Deutsch, religious commitment requires a kind of closedness, but responsiveness to the present requires openness; "grace" was a way of speaking about a harmonious balance between the two. Deutsch also writes (1963, 219)

> Is there perhaps a paradox in the nature of autonomy, in the self-steering and the self-rule of each individual personality, as well as of each autonomous human organization? Autonomy is impossible without openness to communication from the outside world; but at the same time autonomy is impossible unless the incoming flow of external information is overridden to a significant extent by internal memories and preferences. What can go wrong in this precarious pursuit of an ever-changing balance, and how great is the probability of the eventual failure and self-destruction of every autonomous organization?

This is much in the spirit of Rosenstock-Huessy's cross of reality. Deutsch (1956) cites both Rosenstock-Huessy's *The Christian Future* and *Out of Revolution: Autobiography of Western Man.* He wrote a preface (1950) to one of Rosenstock-Huessy's books and a forward (1987) to another. *S*ome influence or interaction linking these two authors is clearly not implausible.

Acknowledgments

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