

## *In Memoriam: Henry Rosemont, Jr. (1934–2017)*

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Henry Rosemont, Jr. died peacefully on Sunday July 2, 2017 at his home in Newport, Rhode Island, at the age of eighty-two. The world-renowned and beloved Confucian scholar was watched over by three generations of his family that day.

Henry was born in December, 1934, in Chicago, the eldest son to two significant rank-and-file labor activists, Sally (Janiak) and Henry P. Rosemont. His mother was a jazz musician and his father belonged to the Chicago Typographical Union No. 16, the union shop of Albert Parsons, among the Haymarket martyrs and husband of Lucy Parsons, one of the founders of the Industrial Workers of the World.<sup>1</sup> Just as the American printing unions were critical to ushering in the 40-hour work week in America, the Rosemont family have had a critical impact on American letters. Henry's younger brother, Franklin (1943–2009), was editor of the Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, America's oldest radical labor press. Franklin, with wife, Penelope, and Paul Garon established the Chicago Surrealist Group after meeting with Andre Breton in Paris in 1965. Through the words, works, and actions of the Rosemont family, generations of people have had their lives transformed for the better.

Henry Rosemont, Jr. was a life-changing teacher. He began his teaching career at Oakland University in 1967 and brought his students to study in China for a semester that year. Perhaps guided by his experience in Korea, Henry supported his former student, Michael K. Honey, in his petition to the Boston draft board for alternate service rather than fight in Vietnam in 1969. Sponsored by Unitarian Universalist Association, Honey served for six years in the American south during the Civil Rights Movement, an experience that would greatly inform the Guggenheim Fellow's celebrated scholarship.<sup>2</sup> Beginning in 1982, Henry began teaching at Fudan University and attained the rank of Senior Professor there. It was during his first years at Fudan that he wrote his "Shanghai Journal" for *In These Times*. Henry's reportage from Shanghai is indicative of his commitment to social change as demonstrated by his other writings published in the *Resist Newsletter*, *Anarchist Quarterly*, *Z Magazine*, and *Social Anarchism*. From Henry we learn that philosophy is a calling and it is done best when we are attuned to the sound from the ground.

At the age of eighteen, after several years of hitchhiking west on Route 66 and with the education that a string of undistinguished jobs provides, Henry volunteered to be sent to the Korean peninsula as a member of the U.S. Marine Corps, serving from 1952 until 1955. It was in Korea that he first encountered "East Asia" and learned the insanity of war. He earned an honors AB at the University of Illinois and was awarded in 1967 the PhD in Philosophy at the University of Washington for his dissertation on logic, language, and Zen. He then completed postdoctoral training in Linguistics with Noam Chomsky at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology between 1969 and 1971. Their friendship sustained for more than four decades. Consistently and in the care-full manner of the Confucian sage, Henry sought to emulate what was best in his teachers. From Chomsky he found "living proof that intelligence could serve conscience as well as abstract theory."<sup>3</sup> Henry, himself, is often described by those who know him as embodying the *jūnzǐ* (君子), which he and Roger Ames translate, in their *Philosophical Translation of the Analects* (1998) as "exemplary person." Socially and politically engaged, the Confucian tradition characterizes the *jūnzǐ* as being trustworthy and calm (*Analects* 8.6), both deferring to others on matters they don't understand and not being careless in

their attitude toward what is said (13.3). The *junzi* are on the side of the needy and the poor, rather than making the rich richer (6.4), they don't associate with the unkind (17.7) and are consummate in their acts and align what they do with what they say they will do (15.19). Henry made good on what he said he would do.

The reader curious to know what Henry Rosemont, Jr. did with his life will be well rewarded by consulting the book published in his honor, *Polishing the Chinese Mirror* (2008), edited by Marthe Chandler and Ronnie Littlejohn, sponsored by the Association of Chinese Philosophers in America. Henry's scholarship presents significant engagements with several mutually-informing areas of thought including: Linguistics and the nature and use of the Chinese language, religious practice, and experience, education (particularly its transformative potential), philosophy, and effecting socio-political change toward the flourishing of human life across the globe. Featuring insightful and carefully crafted essays from four generations of scholars whose works have been impacted by Rosemont, Jr., Chandler and Littlejohn's volume typifies what is best in the mode of *Festschriften*: a collection of critical essays from close friends and colleagues, mentors, and students. This book also serves as a *Berufung*—a call, to the field revealing where the work can be continued.

Anyone who reads or has had the pleasure of talking with Henry cannot help but be aware of his language: precise and engendering community. The adage holds: the acorn falls not far from the tree. The senior Rosemont is remembered for his unexcelled knowledge and use of the English language, "But above all," his union brothers state, Henry's father was, "a *militant unionist*, unwaveringly devoted to the cause of workingclass emancipation. In the shop, at union meetings, on the picketline, he was known to the whole union as a stirring presence. His strength of character, erudition, humor, steadfast loyalty to principles and sense of fair play—together with an 'old-fashioned' simplicity and quiet dignity—made him a truly outstanding figure."<sup>4</sup> Like his father, Henry wrote in a manner that both illuminates the matter at hand and draws-in the reader as a friend, the effect is a feeling of communal care. I feel drawn to celebrate the people they wrote about, and to emulate them—both the authors and their subjects.

Henry is a model for collegiality, which he demonstrated not only by the admiration of his peers and associates but also by his commitment to celebrating what is excellent in those for whom he cared and with whom he worked. He contributed to a number of volumes celebrating the careers of a range of excellent scholars including: Herbert Fingarette, Huston Smith, Eliot Deutsch, and Nathan Sivin. Henry edited the volume honoring A.C. Graham in 1991 (he also memorialized Graham in the pages of *Philosophy East & West* in 1992, his memorial serving as a model for mine to Henry). In 2005, with Ewing Chinn, Henry was responsible for the book celebrating David L. Hall. Henry also edited, with significant help from Michael Nylan—although she declined the credit—the recent (2014) collection of David N. Keightley's writings on Early China. Keightley made his transition less than six months before Henry this year.

Henry published his *Against Individualism: A Confucian Rethinking of the Foundations of Morality, Politics, Family, and Religion* (Lexington Books, 2016) not as a missive against celebrating particularity, but rather to honor and encourage the growth of the relationships that make "us" particularly-us. "Who we are" is the sum of the relationships we perform and are born into, as he would often tell us. Through meaning-generating relationships I become individuated: I am the son of Sally, Steve and Michelle, I am the husband of Karen, father of Pendleton, brother of Stanfield and Jennifer, the student of so many excellent teachers, the neighbor of Jyotsna and of Marvin, the uncle to Nora and Henry, I am now the teacher of my own students. Each of these roles have proscribed how I ought to act at times and, as I have come to demonstrate suitable virtuosity in performing these roles, I have been granted more and more relative autonomy within my lifetime. Now I am in a position to reflect on and model for others how we can best perform our roles.

Henry Rosemont, Jr. taught me to follow John Donne's meditation, the source of the expressions, "no man is an island," and "for whom the bell tolls." No person is an island because we are all of the continent named humanity; we need not ask for whom the bell tolls because it tolls for thee, thus every

person's death lessens me. In his essay, "On the Non-Finality of Physical Death in Classical Confucianism,"<sup>5</sup> we are given a thought experiment. Imagine we have arrived at a cemetery, where a deceased loved one is interred, and we, at the headstone, give some words to the decedent. Imagine an interlocutor we don't know were to arrive on the scene and ask us, who do we think we're talking to? Despite knowing the person we are communicating to is "fully and utterly dead," we still talk to them. We still hear their call.

I listen for Henry's voice often, and not infrequently, I hear him greet me and my fellow, "Journeyman scholars" as he did during the Midsouth Philosophy Conference at the University of Memphis in 2006. In the history of the printer's craft, a Journeyman has advanced through their Apprenticeship and at this stage must leave the care of their Master Printer's shop (these shops are called "chapels" among the printer community). After a number of years accumulating knowledge and honing their craft, the Journeyman printer's peregrinations end and they establish their own chapel. Henry and Roger Ames present, in their philosophical translation of the *Xiaojing*, which they render as *The Chinese Classic of Family Reverence* (2009), a vision of Confucianism that is a religiosity without a God. The totality of human experience itself is sacred. Henry has built a chapel in which we can tarry a bit longer with him, affording us a chance to practice a religion which "is not the root of the flourishing community, nor its seed, but rather its radiant flower."<sup>6</sup>

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- <sup>1</sup> Joseph Jablonski, "Remembering Franklin Rosemont," *Yardbird Reader*, July 7, 2009, n.p. [http://www.yardbird.com/reader\\_franklin\\_rosemont.htm](http://www.yardbird.com/reader_franklin_rosemont.htm)
  - <sup>2</sup> Michael K. Honey, "Toward a Better World: Following the Way of Martin Luther King," *Beacon Broadside*, August 29, 2014. n.p. <http://www.beaconbroadside.com/broadside/2014/08/following-the-way-of-martin-luther-king.html>
  - <sup>3</sup> Henry Rosemont, Jr. "The Education of a Philosopher, of Sorts," in *Falling in Love with Wisdom: American Philosophers Talk about Their Calling*, David D. Karnos and Robert G. Shoemaker, eds., (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 131.
  - <sup>4</sup> Sic. Henry P. Rosemont, "About the Author," from the Chicago Typographical Union's *Reporter*, January, 1980, found in *American Labor's First Strike*, introduced by Dave Roediger (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 2007), 119.
  - <sup>5</sup> Published in *Acta Orientalia Vilnensia* 8, no. 2, (2007): 13–31.
  - <sup>6</sup> Henry Rosemont, Jr. and Roger T. Ames, *The Chinese Classic of Family Reverence: A Philosophical Translation of the Xiaojing* (Honolulu: University of Hawai'i Press, 2009), 60.