

THE PROBLEM WITH ERIC VOEGELIN'S HISTORICAL
CONCEPTION OF PHILOSOPHY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a critical examination of Eric Voegelin's historical conception of philosophy. Voegelin is of particular relevance to a student of religion in that he argues that philosophy and history can only be properly understood in terms of a "divine ground." Central to this thesis, then, is the attempt to understand in what sense philosophy and history can be spoken of in relation to a divine ground, how that ground is known, and what it is.

Voegelin's argument is wide-ranging: it involves 1) a powerful criticism of contemporary understandings of science and philosophy; 2) a detailed argument about the proper nature of political science; 3) an extensive analysis of the main political-philosophical writings of the West, particularly those of Plato and Aristotle. The scope of his writings and so of his argument presents a problem for any analysis - but I will be selective in terms of the issues raised in the first paragraph.

A substantial part of this thesis involves the attempt to clarify and recount Voegelin's argument as he makes it in his various writings. However, I think that certain critical questions can be raised about his position and these will be developed as his position is clarified.

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INTRODUCTION

Today, the meaning of philosophy has come to be understood as being very closely related to that of history. One of the greatest contemporary philosophical thinkers, Eric Voegelin, argues that because philosophy and history are so closely related in essence, it would be impossible to discuss their meanings separately.¹ There are two reasons why Voegelin believes this. First, he maintains that man's existence in the world is historical existence, and philosophy insofar as it is concerned with seeking knowledge of this existence, must therefore be concerned with the meaning of history.² Secondly, he argues that by looking at the emergence of philosophy in history, understanding what it is that philosophy is concerned with, and then seeing its development through time, its essence will become manifest.

According to Voegelin, the discovery of philosophy is not an indifferent happening that at some time emerges in the stream of time only to submerge again. Rather it constitutes the discovery of a reality that is the divine ground of human existence.³ Prior to this discovery man was not conscious of his divine ground and thus was unaware of the meaning of history.⁴ For this reason Voegelin asserts that philosophy is thus an event of specific significance for the understanding of history, insofar as through it history is lifted into consciousness as the realization of the divine in time.⁵

The term which Voegelin uses to describe this reality, is

"eternal being."⁶ Eternal being is understood by Voegelin as that reality of human existence that comprises the essence of both philosophy and history.⁷ Before the discovery of philosophy, eternal being was yet to be realized by man. He asserts that the discovery of philosophy thus constitutes an epoch in history, a beginning which illuminates for the first time to man the divine ground of his existence.⁸ In the following lines Voegelin clarifies what he means by this:

Philosophy is not an indifferent happening that at some time emerges in the stream of time only to submerge again. Rather, it is an event of specific significance for history insofar as through it history is lifted into consciousness as the realization of eternal being in time. Knowledge, hitherto confined to the compact experience of the cosmos and its expression through myth, then affected by the experience of transcendence, is thereby differentiated and fully articulated through the formation of philosophical concepts. Philosophy thus engenders a consciousness of epoch in the philosophers. The men in whom philosophy becomes an event are aware that it constitutes an epoch in history, a mark from which one distinguishes between a before and an after. 9

For Voegelin, philosophy illuminates the meaning of history as the realization of eternal being in time. This realization, however, is not something to be comprehended objectively.¹⁰ "Eternal being is not an external object that could be discovered and studied ad libitum, but rather it is a compelling experience whenever it irrupts into time, thereby realizing itself."¹¹ He asserts that the place where this realization occurs is in the soul of the philosopher, the lover of wisdom.¹²

There is no philosophy without philosophers, namely without men whose soul responds to eternal being. If history is the process in which eternal being unusually

complex, cannot be fully covered but can only realize itself in time, philosophy is a historical event in the precise sense that eternal being become real in time as the response of the philosopher. Philosophy becomes a constituent of history because, history is the constituent of philosophy. 13

In The New Science of Politics, Voegelin maintains that philosophy begins with the discovery of the human soul.¹⁴ Prior to this discovery, he argues that man had no soul insofar as man had not yet experienced eternal being in time. According to Voegelin, Plato was the first writer to adequately differentiate and articulate the meaning of what this discovery of the soul implies in terms of philosophy and history.¹⁵ Plato's dialogues are thus understood by Voegelin as the first philosophical discourses to make conscious the meaning of history as the realization of eternal being in time.¹⁶

In considering Voegelin's understanding of the relation between philosophy, history, and eternal being, several difficulties come to my mind. The first concerns his assumption that philosophy is an event in time that constitutes the discovery of the human soul and thus the divine ground of man's existence. If Plato's writings are the first philosophical discourses to illuminate the meaning of history, why doesn't he speak of the discovery of the human soul in this way? In the Meno, for example, Plato does not speak of the soul of man in terms of its historical discovery.¹⁷ Rather, for Plato, the soul is to be understood as the essence of what is unchanging in man. It is that reality of man's being that is immortal and eternally participates in God. Plato argues that

the knowledge of this participation is to be understood in terms of recollection; the uncovering of what we are in terms of what we have forgotten in human existence.¹⁸ This implies that the knowledge of man's existence is not something to be spoken of in terms of new historical discoveries. For Plato, the knowledge which becomes illuminated in philosophy concerns the divine reality we have always known. To use an old cliché there is nothing new under the sun in Plato's understanding of the love (philos) of wisdom (sophia).

The second difficulty I find with Voegelin's understanding of philosophy stems from his belief that the men in whom philosophy becomes an event, are aware that it constitutes an epoch in history, one which distinguishes between a before and an after. If this statement is true, why doesn't Plato speak of the knowledge that is illuminated in philosophy in this way? Plato does not speak of himself or his teacher, Socrates, as being people who discover new knowledge. Plato does not understand the love of wisdom in terms of a historical discovery that distinguishes between a before and an after. I maintain that Voegelin's intent upon developing a philosophy restricts him from adequately understanding Plato's conception of philosophy. I will argue that Voegelin's assumptions about the meaning of history prevent him from penetrating to the core of Plato's thought.

In considering these difficulties it is important to also realize that Voegelin's understanding of philosophy has been greatly

shaped by his attempt to overcome contemporary restricted understandings of the meaning of history. For example, Hegel's great enterprise of trying to make intelligible the meaning of history in terms of philosophy and science, has had a profound impact on Voegelin's thought. Although Voegelin indicates his differences with Hegel, he still gets caught up in the Hegelian way of looking at the beginnings of philosophy and then attempting to understand its meaning historically. Voegelin accepts the Hegelian assumption that philosophy begins with Plato's discover of Reason in history.¹⁹ Although Voegelin substitutes the term eternal being for Hegel's concept of Reason, the similarities between the ways both these men conceive the essence of philosophy can be seen. They both attempt to illuminate its meaning in terms of what becomes historically realized in time.

The difficulty that I find with Voegelin's attempt to speak about the meaning of philosophy in this way, is that he ends up restricting himself from adequately illuminating what Plato meant by the love of wisdom. For Plato philosophy is not to be understood in terms of an historical discovery. The love of wisdom is rather to be comprehended in relation to that reality of what we are that is unchanging and eternal. Philosophy is the love which illuminates this reality. The divine ground that becomes realized in this love is not to be understood in relation to an historical process.

This touches upon the final problem that I have with Voegelin's intent to develop a philosophy of history. If the love

of wisdom is to be understood in relation to divine reality, does it make sense to speak of eternal being in terms of a process of self-realization? Is the knowledge of the divine to be understood in terms of new historical discoveries?

In the Republic, Plato discusses the difference between what it means to have knowledge of reality and what it means to have an opinion. (477a-479e) He argues that knowledge is concerned with the things of this world that do not change. Opinions, however are subject to change and variation. Even if an opinion be right, it does not possess the critical standards of science that transform it into knowledge. Knowledge, according to Plato, does not change insofar as it is bound to what is eternal, what is God.

Voegelin, however, speaks of God in relation to an historical process of self realization. If the divine is to be spoken of in this way, we must ask ourselves whether or not it makes sense to speak of knowledge in relation to it. It seems to me that to speak of God in this way is to say that the knowledge of human existence is subject to opinion insofar as the essence of what we are is subject to a changing reality. Voegelin, himself, asserts that the drama in which we participate, history, is not a given thing about which one can state propositions.²⁰ "The philosopher does not look at this non-thing as an observer but, in philosophizing turns into an actor in the drama of which he wants to make statements."²¹

I maintain that when one understands philosophy in this

way it becomes extremely difficult to speak about the meaning of human existence in terms of knowledge. As we examine Voegelin's understanding of the relation between philosophy, history, and eternal being, we shall keep this difficulty in mind. I will argue that Voegelin's understanding of the meaning of philosophy is restricted by his conception of history.

My inquiry into Voegelin's understanding of philosophy and history will be divided into three chapters. In the first chapter I will make several preliminary remarks with respect to Voegelin's understanding of political science and its dependence on the love of wisdom. These remarks will serve as a basis for approaching his understanding of a philosophy of history.

In the second chapter I will then go into a more detailed examination of what Voegelin means by philosophical experience and its relation to history. In this chapter it will be necessary to look at the influence that Aristotle's understanding of philosophy has had on Voegelin insofar as I believe that it is this influence that leads to certain restrictions in Voegelin's interpretations of what Plato meant by the love of wisdom.

Finally, I will raise certain critical questions and problems with respect to Voegelin's readings of Plato's writings. These questions will make clear the problem with Voegelin's historical interpretation of philosophy.

NOTES

- ¹ E. Voegelin, Anamnesis, Trans. and ed. Gerhart Niemeyer, (Notre Dame and London: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978), pp. 116-117.
- ² E. Voegelin, The New Science of Politics, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952) p. 1.
- ³ Voegelin, Anamnesis, pp. 116-118.
- ⁴ Ibid, p. 116.
- ⁵ Ibid, p. 116. Voegelin maintains that philosophy has a definite historical beginning. Prior to its discovery divine reality was not yet known by man.
- ⁶ Ibid. p. 116. The term eternal being refers to the divine ground of man's existence. For Voegelin, eternal being is God.
- ⁷ Ibid, p. 116.
- ⁸ pp. 116-117.
- ⁹ Ibid, pp. 116-117.
- ¹⁰ Ibid, p. 117. Eternal being is understood by Voegelin in terms of certain experiences that lead one into the consciousness of a transcendental reality. This reality cannot be comprehended objectively insofar as it is not an object of phenomena.
- ¹¹ Ibid, p. 117. In the act of philosophizing, Voegelin maintains that eternal being reveals itself to man thereby realizing itself in time. Also see The New Science of Politics pp. 67-69.
- ¹² Ibid, p. 117.
- ¹³ Ibid, p. 117-118. Voegelin defines the soul of man as that place or sensorium where man experiences God. God reveals himself to man by way of love or Grace, and man responds to this love by seeking knowledge. According to Voegelin, philosophy is the quest for knowledge.

- ¹⁴ Voegelin, The New Science of Politics, p. 67.
- ¹⁵ Ibid, p. 67. According to Voegelin, before the discovery of philosophy man did not know his divine ground. For this reason, Voegelin argues that man had no soul insofar as the discovery of philosophy illuminates the soul as the place where man encounters the divine.
- ¹⁶ Ibid, p. 1. Voegelin's understanding of political science (the quest for the knowledge of the ways we order and represent the meaning of our existences in society) is dependent upon the discovery of philosophy by Socrates and Plato. He argues that Plato's writings are the first philosophical discourses to articulate what this discovery implies with respect to the meaning of political science. Also see Anamnesis pp. 124, 184.
- ¹⁷ Plato "Meno" The Collected Dialogues of Plato, ed. Edith Hamilton and Huntington Cairns, trans. W.K.C. Guthrie, (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1961) 81d, 85d-86b.
- ¹⁸ Ibid, see Meno (85d-87a)
- ¹⁹ Voegelin, The New Science of Politics, pp. 1-4.
- ²⁰ Voegelin, Anamnesis, p. 116.
- ²¹ Ibid, p. 116.

I

VOEGELIN'S UNDERSTANDING OF THE RELATION BETWEEN POLITICAL SCIENCE AND PHILOSOPHY

In The New Science of Politics, Voegelin asserts that the "existence of man in political society is historical existence; and a theory of politics if it penetrates to principles, must at the same time be a theory of history."¹ In order to understand the meaning of this assertion, it is necessary to realize that a) a theory of politics is not just any opining about the meaning of existence, but rather the attempt to formulate the meaning of existence by penetrating to the nature of political reality; and that b) history is the process in which the knowledge of this reality is revealed to man by the divine ground of his existence.² For this reason he maintains that a theory of politics is synonymous with political science insofar as it claims knowledge of this ground.³

We will begin our inquiry into Voegelin's understanding of a theory of politics and its relation to history by examining his understanding of political science and its dependence on philosophy. This, however, poses a problem for us because today the meaning of political science has been separated from that of political philosophy. This break coincides with the larger separation between science and philosophy.⁴ At one time science and philosophy were

not distinguished in the way they are today. According to Voegelin, the knowledge of political reality was dependent upon those philosophic experiences which lead to the divine ground of reality.⁵ However, Voegelin points out that with the unfolding of the positivistic sciences, a divine ground of existence, that could not be empirically verified, was denied.⁶ Philosophic experiences which claimed knowledge of the divine were therefore considered irrelevant to the purposes of political science.⁷

Voegelin writes that the positivistic sciences were only interested in the kind of knowledge that could be empirically ascertained. For example, it was thought that the methods used in the physical sciences would yield such knowledge. He explains this in the following passage:

In the first place, the splendid unfolding of the natural sciences was co-responsible with other factors for the assumption that the methods used in the mathematizing sciences of the external world were possessed of some inherent virtue and that all other sciences would achieve comparable success if they followed the example and accepted these methods as their model. This belief was a harmless idiosyncrasy that would have died out when the enthusiastic admirers of the model method set to work in their own science and did not achieve the expected successes. It became dangerous because it combined with the second assumption that the methods of the natural sciences were a criterion for theoretical relevance in general. ⁸

In contrast to this conception of science, Voegelin defines science "as the search for truth concerning the various realms of being."⁹ He considers this definition necessary to recover the meaning of science as the truthful account of the structure of reality, "as the theoretical orientation of man in his world, and as the

great instrument for man's understanding of his own position in the universe."¹⁰

The problem that Voegelin sees in the contemporary understanding of science, is that when a method becomes the sole criterion for science, theoretical relevance is diminished. The subordination of theoretical relevance to method restricts the meaning of science as the quest for knowledge. Although Voegelin is well aware that methods have their place in the activity of science, they are not a sufficient condition for the search for truth.

The danger that Voegelin sees in the subordination of theoretical relevance to method, is that certain experiences that are vital for the understanding of what it means to have a science of political order will be left out of the quest for knowledge. Voegelin maintains that in order to obtain knowledge of political reality we must realize that the essential component of this reality, is man. For this reason, it is clear that we are not dealing with something that can be treated only as a physical object. For example, as human beings we have certain needs and desires that are vital for our survival. Needs and desires cannot be seen, yet they are a part of what we are as humans and they lead to the formations of political orders, (i.e. the kinds of orders that we think best secure the fulfillment of our needs). If political science is restricted by a method of investigation that does not allow one to consider the needs of a people, it will obviously be restricted in its search for the knowledge of what political reality is. Voegelin

ponts out that because contemporary political science is satisfied with a mere description of existing political orders, it is limited in its search for the knowledge of how and why political orders emerge. He asserts that because contemporary political science denies the relevance of metaphysical questions, it has blinded itself to the knowledge of political reality.¹² Voegelin explains this problem in the following lines:

... that problems couched in other terms were illusionary problems, that in particular metaphysical questions which do not admit of answers by the methods of the science of phenomena should not be asked, that realms of being not accessible to the exploration by the model methods were irrelevant, and in the extreme, that such realms of being did not exist. 13

Science cannot be limited by methods of investigation which prevent the contemplation of those experiences which lead to metaphysical questions. For example, it is clear that the needs of man have lead to certain metaphysical questions and experiences. Some of these experiences are religious; what we think the good life is all about; if there is a God, how does man represent this reality politically. Voegelin points out that the idea of God has shaped many political orders and to refuse to think about why this has happened is to restrict oneself from obtaining knowledge of society. If political science does not want to restrict itself in its pursuit of the knowledge of political reality, it must consider the meaning of those experiences which have lead to the political representation of God. This implies that if a method of investigation prohibits the contemplation of such representation, it should be abandoned.

The question therefore arises as to how political science can deal with experiences which have lead to metaphysical questions. According to Voegelin, this is the importance of understanding the relation between philosophy and science. In philosophic experience, Voegelin believes that man becomes open to the truth of reality. By considering what Voegelin means by the word "noesis" (the philosophic way of reasoning about the nature of political reality) we can begin to understand why political science is dependent on philosophy.

Noesis is an Aristotelian term that Voegelin adopts in order to explain his conception of the relation between philosophy and history.¹⁴ In noesis, Voegelin asserts that the philosopher experiences a conversion, the turning around from the opinions which make up the existing political order, to the truth of what that order is and what it is directed at.¹⁵ Voegelin writes, that the noetic understanding of political reality must be distinguished from the kinds of experiences which lead to the self-interpretation of a society.¹⁶ The self-interpretation of society is the political articulation and representation of what the various members of a society feel to be the good life, according to Voegelin. He explains this as follows:

Human society is not merely a fact, or an event to be studied by an observer like a natural phenomenon. Though it has externality as one of its important components, it is as a whole a little world, a cosmion, illuminated with meaning from within by the human beings who continuously create and bear it as the mode and condition of their self-realization. It is illuminated through an elaborate symbolism in various degrees of compactness and differentiation--

from rite, through myth, to theory- and this symbolism illuminates it with meaning insofar as the symbols make the internal structure of such a cosmion, the relations between its members and groups of members, as well as its existence as a whole, transparent for the mystery of human existence. 17

Noesis refers to the kinds of experiences which desire knowledge of what this self-interpretation is directed at.¹⁸ Is there a telos to the ways we interpret and articulate the order of society? Is there something within "human nature" that desires the good itself?

Voegelin maintains that man's desires for the good life, results from man's need for the good itself.¹⁹ All desires and needs are directed at the idea of the good.²⁰ Voegelin's understanding of this idea has been largely shaped by Plato's understanding, that as human beings we do not desire what is bad for ourselves. We may misreason as to what we think is good for ourselves, but essentially all our needs and our desires are directed at the good.²¹

This raises the question as to the meaning of what is good. Obviously the good is not an object to be studied like other natural phenomena. The "good" does not exist like a table exists. Yet man's desire for it and experience of it, is very real. The desire for the good life must be considered in any discussion of the meaning of political science.

According to Voegelin, it is in the experience of noesis that the good becomes illuminated to man. This good, in Voegelin's view, is to be understood in relation to the divine telos or ground

of human existence. The divine is the good itself; it is the cause and the reality of our existences.²² Voegelin's understanding of this reality has been largely shaped by Plato's and Aristotle's understanding's of how the divine is realized in philosophy.

It is here that we begin to touch upon Voegelin's historical conception of what philosophy means with respect to the understanding of political reality. Voegelin does not believe that philosophy can be understood independently of history, since philosophy in his view has a definite historical realization.²³ This realization is the discovery of the human soul, the place or sensorium where man experiences God for the first time in history. He writes that the soul is to be understood as "the new center where man experiences himself as open towards divine reality."²⁴ Noetic interpretations which arise out of philosophic experience are to be understood in relation to what Voegelin calls "man's new historical consciousness of God."²⁵ He writes that prior to the discovery of the human soul, man's earlier mythological experiences of reality reflect an inadequate interpretation of what the divine is.²⁶ The many gods depicted in the earlier mythological interpretations of reality, give way to new philosophical interpretations.²⁷ Philosophy is therefore understood by Voegelin as an event of specific significance for history insofar as he believes that man becomes conscious of the divine as emerging in time.²⁸

Philosophy becomes a constituent of history and a factor for its structure because history is the process in which eternal being realizes itself in time and secondly philosophy makes conscious the differentiated knowledge of this process. 29

In The New Science of Politics, Voegelin is unclear as to why history is lifted into consciousness at this particular point in time. We might ask Voegelin why it took man so long to discover philosophy. Voegelin does not adequately address this question in this book. However, he does indicate that the discovery of philosophy results from a "divine process of self-realization" in which God reveals ~~itself~~ to man. If philosophy is indeed the result of a divine process of realization and revelation, several other questions come to mind. Why did God take so long to reveal himself to man? Does the discovery of philosophy, which results from a divine process of realization imply that there is something incomplete about the nature of the divine that needs to be fulfilled in time? If the divine is in a process of realization, what does this process mean with respect to the order of society and therefore man? What does it mean to speak of our natures in relation to this reality?

It is here we stumble upon several contradictions in Voegelin's thought. On the one hand he asserts that the discovery of philosophy brings about a change in the mode of knowledge of reality insofar as a) it makes transparent the meaning of history as man's participation in God, b) it provides the correct symbolization for understanding the meaning of this participation.³⁰ He asserts, that in contrast to man's earlier mythological interpretations of the divine, philosophy has the character of rationality and science.³¹ We will recall that for Voegelin science is the quest for knowledge. Knowledge refers to the nature of that which is true and unchanging.

Science is therefore directed at the nature of things that do not change. If the divine is to be understood as the reality in which man participates, does it make sense to speak of such a reality in terms of a process of realization? Does it make sense to speak of what is real and true in this way?

In Anamnesis, Voegelin addresses the above questions. He tells us that as one contrasts the philosophical image of reality to that of the mythical one, "we obviously do not wish to speak of this reality as that which changes." What changes, according to Voegelin, is man's image of divine reality.³²

In the context of this statement, "reality" becomes a kind of constant given, the structure of which is seen better by the philosopher than by the philomysther. This idea has a solid core, inasmuch as there is indeed a difference of truth between the compact cosmic and the noetically differentiating experience, in relation to which difference reality appears as a constant.³³

He then goes on to tell us that this reality also refers to history and this is "characterized by a presence of experience that puts phases of lower grades of truth behind itself as the past."³⁴ For this reason Voegelin also speaks of this reality as changing insofar as it refers to the changes in human existence in which man makes new insights into God.³⁵

The difficulty I find in understanding what Voegelin means here, lies in his assertion that the discovery of philosophy (that which illuminates the consciousness of history) is also the direct result of the divine realizing itself in time. What does Voegelin mean by this process of realization in terms

of the discovery of philosophy?

In The New Science of Politics, Voegelin explains his understanding of the discovery of philosophy in relation to what he thinks is Plato's conception of love (philos). He tells us that Plato is the first philosopher to speak of the discovery of the human soul in terms of man's love of wisdom. Voegelin points out that for Plato the love of wisdom became the pathway to knowledge of divine reality. This love is the result of man's desire for truth.³⁶ He acknowledges love to be Plato's experience of philosophy in which the soul of man becomes noetically "open to the truth." The word open in this case refers to what Voegelin calls the periagoge, the turning around of the soul from the untruth of human existence towards the truth of God.³⁷ As the soul becomes open in love, a strange relation between man and God occurs. On the one hand man reaches out towards God in search of truth and knowledge, and on the other hand God enters his soul feeding him with the proper food that fulfills such a quest.

According to Voegelin, philosophy (the quest for knowledge) in this sense becomes nothing but the exploration of the human soul; the attempt to understand the experience in which man and God encounter one another. Voegelin asserts that Plato was engaged concretely in the exploration of the human soul, and the true order of the soul turned out to be dependent on philosophy in the strict sense of the love of the divine sophon.³⁸ According to Voegelin, it is out of man's love of God that political science emerges.³⁹ He

asserts that Plato was the founder of political science insofar as his writings illuminate for the first time in history the one divine ground of human existence.⁴⁰ It is through man's love of wisdom political science emerges as the pathway to the knowledge of political reality. Voegelin explains this as follows:

The truth of man and the truth of God are inseparably one. Man will be in the truth of his existence when he has opened his psyche to the truth of God; and the truth of God will become manifest in history when it has formed the psyche of man into receptivity for the unseen measure. This is the great subject of the Republic; at the center of the dialogue Plato placed the parable of the cave, with its description of the periagoge, the conversion, the turning around from the untruth of human existence as it prevailed in the Athenian sophistic society to the truth of the Idea. (The Good) Moreover, Plato understood that the best way of securing the truth of existence was proper education from early childhood; for that reason, in Republic II, he wanted to remove symbolizations of the gods, as they were found in the poets, from the education of the young and have them replaced by seemly symbols. ⁴¹

Several concluding remarks are now in order. First, we saw that for Voegelin political science is dependent on philosophy insofar as philosophy illuminates the truth of the order of man and society. Secondly, the realization of this reality must be understood in relation to a historical event, one which marks the "creed of a new epoch." This event constitutes the discovery of the human soul for the first, the sensorium where man experiences God. This discovery effects man's consciousness of reality. It illuminates history as the realization of the divine in time. In The New Science of Politics, we saw that Voegelin's understanding of this event was largely shaped by Plato's conception of the love of wisdom.

Love is the pathway to knowledge, according to Voegelin. It is in love and through love that the truth of man's existence, his historical participation in the divine, becomes known.

Before moving on to consider what Voegelin means by philosophical experience in more detail, we must also realize that Aristotle's understanding of noesis has had a profound impact upon the way in which Voegelin will explain the meaning of political science. In fact, where Voegelin elaborates upon what he means by the love of wisdom he uses Aristotelian concepts insofar as he feels they illuminate the structure of history in a way that has not been surpassed until today.⁴² We must therefore now turn to the way in which Voegelin uses Aristotle's terminology in order to get a better understanding of what he means by philosophic experience.

NOTES

- ¹ Voegelin, The New Science of Politics, p. 1.
- ² Ibid, pp. 1-3. Political reality refers to the divine ground of human existence. It is that reality of man's being that historically becomes known in the act of philosophizing.
- ³ Ibid, pp. 64,69. A theory of politics is not just any opining about the meaning of human existence. Theory is to be understood in terms of man's attempt to articulate the knowledge of reality.
- ⁴ Ibid, pp. 1,4. Since, according to Voegelin, philosophy is the vehicle for obtaining knowledge of political reality, it cannot be separated from the meaning of political science.
- ⁵ Political reality cannot be understood based upon models of science that are restricted from asking questions about man's psychological needs and desires. For example, in order to understand why it is that man desires a good life, a form of science is needed that is not restricted from asking the question what is the Good itself.
- ⁶ Ibid, pp. 3-7.
- ⁷ Ibid, pp. 1,7.
- ⁸ Ibid, p. 4.
- ⁹ Ibid, p. 5.
- ¹⁰ Ibid, p. 5.
- ¹¹ The knowledge which is sought in political science concerns the attempt to understand the ways in which man orders and represents the meaning of his existence. Political science must therefore take into account the meaning of those needs and desire that lead to the formation of laws and customs designed to protect man's well being.

- 13 Ibid, p. 4.
- 14 Voegelin, Anamnesis, pp. 147-148. Noesis is an Aristotlian term that Voegelin adopts in order to speak about man's consciousness of participation in divine reality.
- 15 Voegelin, The New Science of Politics, p. 69. Political reality becomes known when man becomes conscious of his participation in God.
- 16 Ibid. pp. 27,29.
- 17 Ibid, p. 27
- 18 Voegelin Anamnesis, p. 144. The self-interpretation of society is directed conventionally at the attempt to articulate and represent the meaning of man's existence in society. It is symbolic of man's attempt to understand and represent the meaning of reality.
- 19 Ibid, p. 67. Political reality is to be understood and spoken about in terms of man's desire for the Good itself.
- 20 Ibid, p.67. The Good itself is man's political reality insofar as it is the divine ground of his existence.
- 21 Ibid, p. 69.
- 22 Voegelin, Anamnesis, p. 148. The Good is the divine cause and reality of the order of the world, (aition arche).
- 23 Voegelin, The New Science of Politics, p. 1.
- 24 Ibid, p. 67. Voegelin argues that the soul of man is the place where man experiences the love of God. In this experience man discovers his participation in God. Revelation in this sense refers to that which becomes known in the experience of God's love for man. It is Grace.
- 25 Voegelin, Anamnesis, pp. 147,148,152, 154, 159. History is defined by Voegelin as a) the process in which the divine reveals itself to man; b) man's consciousness of participation in God.

II

Voegelin uses Aristotelian concepts in order to explain his understanding of those philosophical experiences which reveal the meaning of history. Voegelin believes that the historical dimension of philosophy is apparent in Aristotle's criticism of man's earlier mythological interpretations of reality.¹ In the following lines Voegelin makes this clear:

Aristotle's name does not conjure up in our time the figure of a philosopher of history. And yet his analysis of the temporal flow in consciousness as the dimension in which noesis recognizes itself as the presence of truth and, at the same time, the myth as the past, is a philosophical accomplishment about history that has not been surpassed until today. 2

Voegelin maintains that in Aristotle's philosophical terminology we can see a symbolic reconstruction of reality; the older mythological articulations of the world, as a cosmos made up of many gods, are replaced by new noetic symbols reflecting man's philosophical experiences of the one divine ground.³

Although I do not contest Voegelin's interpretation of Aristotle's understanding of philosophy, I do maintain that certain problems emerge when he uses Aristotelian concepts in conjunction with insights he has made into Plato's understanding of philosophy.

In The New Science of Politics, we will recall that Voegelin speaks of philosophy as arising out of man's love of God. This definition acknowledged Plato's understanding of philosophy, in which love was experienced as that which illuminated man's participation in the divine. In Anamnesis, however, where Voegelin elaborates upon

his understanding of philosophy, he uses Aristotle's philosophical concepts to explain the meaning of philosophy as arising out of man's existential desire for knowledge. This has lead me to question whether or not Voegelin has recognized the implications and magnitude of his insights into Plato's understanding of philosophy. It is my intention to show that what prevents Voegelin from adequately pursuing his insights into Plato's understanding of philosophy is his attempt to develop a philosophy of history using the scientific terminology of Aristotle. Let us now turn to an examination of the way in which Voegelin does this.

To begin with, Voegelin believes that philosophy must be understood in terms of history and that it arises out of man's existential desire for knowledge. He maintains that in Aristotle's understanding of philosophy, man's abilities to reason about the meaning of existence, lead to those experiences which illuminate man's historical participation in God.⁴ As man seeks knowledge (episteme) of his existence, he discovers a reality that must be understood in relation to a divine ground. Voegelin points out that Aristotle called this participation in God, metalepsis.⁵ According to Voegelin, metalepsis is symbolic of those experiences in which man discovers divine reality, the cause of all things that exist.⁶ Human existence, for Voegelin, is to be understood in terms of metalepsis. He asserts that in Aristotle's understanding of metalepsis there arises, out of man's existential desire for knowledge, a "directional factor."⁷ Aristotle called this factor nous. According

to Voegelin, nous is the "material structure of man's consciousness and order," from which man discovers his attraction towards divine reality.⁸ He asserts that this attraction towards the divine ground of human existence is the result of divine reason working within the human psyche and provoking man to search for the meaning of his existence.⁹

For Voegelin, the moment in history which marks man's realization of his participation in God, is the discovery of the human soul, the sensorium where man experiences the divine nous. Before this event took place, Voegelin argues that man had no soul insofar as he was unaware of history, the sphere of reality in which the divine realizes itself. According to Voegelin, the philosophical experiences which lead to the knowledge of participation in God must be understood in relation to a historical process in which earlier mythological interpretations of the world are replaced by new noetic ones. Before man became conscious of having a soul, he had not yet adequately interpreted the meaning of existence. The discovery of philosophy, therefore, marks the "creed of a new epoch." The mythological symbols reflecting the many gods are replaced by philosophical symbols illuminating the one God. The discovery of the human soul, which is synonymous with the event of philosophy, reveals, according to Voegelin, "the intelligibility of participation itself; it is the event in the history of being through which the logos of participation appears in the luminosity of consciousness."¹⁰

Voegelin maintains that Aristotle's philosophical concepts

reflect the historical dimension of philosophy in a way that has never been articulated before. Although Voegelin believes that Plato was well aware of the philosophical reconstructing of the symbols of reality, he did not fully dissolve the "myth" as a means of interpretation. In Aristotle's writings, Voegelin maintains that there is a more scientific approach to the articulation of reality.¹¹ The older mythological symbols of reality are finally dissolved and replaced by noetic symbols illuminating metalepsis.¹² Voegelin believes that even though the older mythological symbols are joined to the consciousness which attempts to express the experiences of the divine, such interpretations are inadequate and reflect an attempt to illuminate this reality through mere opinion. According to Voegelin, philosophy is scientific and the desire for knowledge leads him into a critical examination of man's earlier mythological interpretations of reality. However, this examination can only take place once the divine nous is realized. In the following lengthy passage we can see the way in which Voegelin uses Aristotelian concepts to explain how this realization of the divine nous comes about.

Noetic interpretations arise when consciousness, on whatever occasion, seeks to become explicit to itself. The endeavor of consciousness to interpret its own logos shall be called noetic exegesis. Since the prototype of such an exegesis, the classical one, was essentially successful, the present attempt can relate to it. With regard to the symbols we can even follow the classical vocabulary, especially that of Aristotle.

In the experience and language of Aristotle man finds himself in a condition of ignorance (agnoia, amathia) with regard to the ground of order (aition,

arche) of his existence. He could not recognize his own ignorance as such, were he not in the throes of a restless urge to escape from ignorance (pheugein ten agnoian) in order to seek knowledge (episteme). Since the term anxiety, which in modern languages signifies this restlessness, has no equivalent in Greek, Aristotle uses specific terms in order to characterize questions in confusion or doubt (diaporein, aporein.) But whoever is perplexed (aporon) and wonders (thaumazon) is conscious (oetai) of being ignorant (agnoein). (Met. 982B18) From questioning restlessness, there arises man's desire to know (tou eidenai ore-gontai). The restless search (zetesis) for the ground of all being is divided into the components of desire (orek-ton) and the known (noeton). (1072A26) Since the search is not blind desire but rather contains the component of insight, we may characterize it as knowing questioning and questioning knowledge. Although the quest implies a component of direction, it still may miss its goal (telos) or be satisfied with a false one. That which gives direction to desire and thus imparts content to it is the ground itself, insofar as it moves man by attraction (kinetai). The tension toward the ground, of which man is conscious, thus must be understood as a unity that may be interpreted but not analyzed into parts. Tracing the exegesis backward, we therefore must say: Without the kinesis of being attracted by the ground, there would be no desire for it; without the desire, no questioning in confusion, no awareness of ignorance. There could be no ignorant anxiety, from which rises the question about the ground, if the anxiety itself were not already man's knowledge of his existence from a ground of being that is not man himself. This directional factor toward the ground Aristotle called nous. 13

This passage serves to show the way in which Voegelin uses Aristotelian concepts to explain his understanding of philosophy as arising out of man's existential desire for knowledge. Voegelin believes that in Aristotle's terminology we can see what this desire implies with respect to the meaning of history. First, the desire for knowledge implies the attempt to scientifically articulate the meaning of divine reality. This applies to those experiences in which the logos of man's participation in God becomes known historically

for the first time. Secondly, this implies a reconstruction of reality; the older mythological articulations of the divine are replaced by new philosophical concepts.

The linear aspect of Voegelin's understanding of a philosophy of history becomes clear. Even though history refers to the consciousness of man's participation in God, it still revolves around the attempt to construct in a linear manner the development of experiences in which the knowledge of divine reality becomes illuminated. Voegelin believes that the discovery of the human soul reveals this new intelligibility of participation in God. This leads to his view that because Plato and Aristotle were the first philosophers to write about the meaning of those experiences in which the soul becomes known, their writings mark the birth of philosophy and thus reflect a moment of great historical significance.

In the last chapter I concentrated on Voegelin's understanding of political science and how it is dependent on philosophy. We saw that for Voegelin, Plato was the first philosopher to adequately distinguish and articulate the meaning of those experiences which lead to knowledge of political reality. For Voegelin, philosophy illuminates the nature of political reality insofar as in philosophical experience, the divine ground of human existence is illuminated. Although Voegelin is unclear as to why at this particular time in history the soul is discovered, he does tell us that philosophy arises out of a) man's existential desire for truth;

b) that at this particular point in history man's desire for knowledge was greatly intensified due to the crisis of Hellenic society.¹⁴ He asserts that "in an hour of crisis, when the order of a society flounders and disintegrates, the fundamental problems of political existence in history are more apt to come into view than in other periods of comparative stability."¹⁵

As I have indicated, Voegelin does not adequately consider the implications of what this divine process of realization means in terms of his insights into Plato's understanding of philosophy as the love of the divine. Are we to assume that the love of God was not known before the discovery of the soul? If Voegelin's assertion that the event of philosophy illuminates the discovery of the human soul, it seems to me that we cannot avoid this conclusion. For this reason we should also expect to find in Plato's writings (considering Voegelin's assumption that Plato is the first philosophical writer) a discussion of what the discovery of the human soul implies with respect to the meaning of philosophy and history.

It is here that I will show that Voegelin has mis-represented Plato's understanding of the love of wisdom. By examining certain passages from the Meno and Phaedrus, where Plato speaks of the human soul in relation to knowledge and to God, we will be able to see that he does not speak of the soul in terms of history. Voegelin's intent to ground philosophy historically prevents him from adequately penetrating to what Plato is saying about the soul in terms of love and God. This has lead me to question the idea that the love

of wisdom is something to be understood in terms of history. Does it make sense to speak of the love of the divine in terms of a historical process of self-realization? Can that which is eternally true, the reality of all things that exist, be spoken of in this way? We shall now turn to an examination of several of Plato's thoughts regarding these matters in order to see the inadequacies in Voegelin's thought.

NOTES

- ¹ Voegelin, Anamnesis, pp. 154-159.
- ² Ibid, p. 158.
- ³ Ibid, p. 158. Voegelin believes that in Aristotle's understanding of philosophy, history is illuminated as the inner dimension of consciousness that desires and seeks divine reality. He argues that Aristotle's insight into the meaning of this quest must be understood in terms of his attempt to reconstruct the image of reality, from a cosmos full of many gods to that of a world with one God.
- ⁴ Ibid, pp. 147-149.
- ⁵ Ibid, pp. 150.
- ⁶ Ibid, pp. 148, 150.
- ⁷ Ibid, p. 148. The directional factor must be understood in relation to the divine realizing itself in time, thus also affecting the ways in which man comes to think about the meaning of reality.
- ⁸ Ibid, p. 149. Kinetai is the word which Voegelin adopts from Aristotle in order to explain man's attraction towards God.
- ⁹ Ibid, p. 149.
- ¹⁰ Ibid, p. 150-151.
- ¹¹ Ibid, pp. 149-151.
- ¹² Ibid, p. 148.
- ¹³ Ibid, pp. 148-149.
- ¹⁴ Voegelin, The New Science of Politics, pp. 1-2.

III

The difficulties that I have with Voegelin's historical conception of philosophy can be seen by examining the following two themes: 1) Plato does not understand philosophy in relation to an historical discovery of the human soul; 2) Philosophy, the love of wisdom, does not arise out of man's existential desire for knowledge, rather it is to be understood in terms of the Love of God which illuminates the reality we participate in.

1) As we have seen, Voegelin believes that philosophy is an historical event constituting the discovery of the human soul for the first time in history. He argues that Plato's dialogues are the first philosophical writings to reflect the meaning of this discovery. If Voegelin's insights into Plato's writings are true, we should therefore expect to find Plato speaking of the human soul in this way. I will show, by examining several important passages from Plato's Meno, Phaedrus, and Republic, that Plato does not understand philosophy or the human soul in relation to a historical discovery.

In the beginning of the Meno, Plato raises several questions concerning the knowledge of virtue: "Is virtue something that can be taught? Or is it neither teaching nor practice that gives it but rational aptitude or something else?" (70a) In raising these questions, Plato intends to show that knowledge is not something that can be spoken of in terms of new historical discoveries. Knowledge,

whether it be of mathematics, physics, political order, love, virtue, or anything, is to be understood in terms of recollection, the recalling or remembering of the divine reality we have always participated in.

Plato understands this reality as the cause of human existence. It is the divine essence of man and the world which makes things what they are and what they are fitted to be. The knowledge which is sought of this reality must be recalled insofar as Plato believes it has always been within our souls, and that our souls are immortal.

If the human soul is immortal, as Plato suggests, we can see the difficulty in speaking about its nature in terms of an historical discovery. Notice what Plato says about the soul's nature in the following passage:

Those how tell it are priests and priestesses of the sort who make it their business to be able to account for the functions they perform. Pindar speaks of it too, and many of the other poets who are divinely inspired. What they say is this - see whether you think they are speaking the truth. They say that the soul of man is immortal. At one time it comes to an end - that which is called death - and at another is born again, but is never finally exterminated. On these grounds a man must live all his days as righteously as possible. (81b)

In this passage, Plato does not speak about the human soul in terms of a historical discover. In fact, in the above passage we can see that he makes references to earlier poets and priests, who he feels are divinely inspired. We must realize that these people were Plato's predecessors. For this reason, we can see

that Voegelin's assumption that Plato is the first philosophic thinker to speak of the human soul in terms of a new historical discovery is a misinterpretation of what Plato is saying here. Plato does not believe that the human soul was discovered in history. He does not speak of himself as being the first philosophical writer to speak about its nature. Again, we will notice in the following lines the way in which Plato speaks of the soul in terms of knowledge:

The soul, since it is immortal and has been born many times, has seen all things both here and in the other world, has learned everything that is. So we need not be surprised if it can recall the knowledge of virtue or anything else which, as we see, it once possessed. All nature is akin, and when a man has recalled a single piece of knowledge, learned it, in ordinary language there is no reason why he should not find out all the rest, if he keeps a stout heart and does not grow weary of the search, for seeking and learning are in fact nothing but recollection. (81d)

The idea that seeking and learning are nothing but recollection, reflects Plato's understanding that the knowledge of the divine has always been within our souls. For Plato, human existence is a fall from the divine. It constitutes our forgetfulness of the reality from whence we came. As we seek to obtain knowledge of who and what we are, we begin to recall the eternal being that is the essence of our natures. What appears to be a new discovery, is in reality nothing but the remembering of the divine reality we have always participated in. Plato illuminates this in the following discussion between Socrates and Meno.

Socrates: This knowledge will not come from teaching but from questioning. He will recover it for himself.

Meno: Yes

Socrates: Either then he has at some time acquired the knowledge which he now has, or he has always possessed it. If he always possessed it, he must always have known; if on the other hand he acquired it at some previous time, it cannot have been in this life, unless somebody has taught him all these? You ought to know, especially as he has been brought up in your household.

Meno: Yes, I know that no one ever taught him.

Socrates: And has he these opinions, or hasn't he?

Meno: It seems we can't deny it.

Socrates: Then if he did not acquire them in this life, isn't it immediately clear that he possessed and had learned them during some other period?

Meno: It seems so.

Socrates: If then there are going to exist in him, both while he is and while he is not a man true opinions which can be aroused by questioning and turned into knowledge, may we say that his soul has ever been in a state of knowledge? Clearly he always either is or is not a man.

Meno: Clearly.

Socrates: And if the truth about reality is always in our soul, the soul must be immortal, and one must take courage and try to discover - that is to recollect - what one doesn't happen to know, or, more correctly, remember, at the moment. (85d-86b)

If what Plato says in the above lines is true, we can see the difficulty that arises in trying to speak of the human soul in terms of a new historical discovery. To say that the soul of man is realized in the event of philosophy, is to speak of knowledge in relation to new discoveries. Voegelin maintains that Plato's writings reflect this historical conception of reality. However, we have now seen that Plato does not speak of the human soul in the way that Voegelin suggests he does. For this reason, we should question Voegelin's interpretations of Plato's writings.

The major difficulty that I find in Voegelin's under-

standing of Plato's writings, stems from the way he historically grounds philosophy. Nowhere, for example, does Plato speak of philosophy in terms of a new historical discovery. The love, (philos) which he speaks of comes from God and must be understood in terms of Grace. Voegelin, however, speaks of this love as if it were the same thing as man's desire for truth. Although I believe he is right in saying that philosophy arises out of love, I feel he is mistaken when he equates this love with man's existential desire for knowledge.

In the last chapter we saw that where Voegelin speaks about the meaning of philosophic experience he had chosen to use Aristotle's philosophical concepts to explain philosophy as arising out of man's existential desire for knowledge. In order to understand how this leads to certain restrictions in approaching a study of Plato's understanding of the love of wisdom, it is necessary to show that there is a difference between what Plato means by love and the way Voegelin explains this love in relation to man's desire for truth.

2) For Plato, the love of wisdom does not simply arise out of man's existential desire for truth. The love which leads to wisdom is not to be understood as a desire arising out of man. For Plato, love is very much connected with what reality is. It is that which leads us to knowledge and truth and it comes to us from the divine ground we seek to know. In the Phaedrus Plato speaks of this love as being a god, and when man encounters this god he

experiences a heaven sent madness fraught with the highest bliss.

(244a) The appearance of this madness is the divine love that moves the philosopher to seek knowledge. According to Plato, these who receive this love are "bestowed with the greatest of blessings." (244b) This idea reflects Plato's belief that love is something that descends from the divine to man lifting his soul upwards towards God, the reality man longs to return to. In this sense, love is to be spoken of in terms of God's Grace.

For Plato, God's Grace is not something to be spoken of in relation to an historical discovery by man. Plato is well aware that many of his predecessors who have accomplished great things have been possessed by this love. Plato speaks of this in the following passage:

...'false is the tale' that when a lover is at hand favor ought rather to be accorded to one who does not love, on the ground that the former is mad, and the latter sound of mind. That would be right if it were invariable truth that madness is an evil but in reality, the greatest of blessings come by way of madness, indeed of madness that is heaven-sent. It was then they were mad that the prophetess at Delphi and the priestesses at Dodona achieved so much for which both states and individuals in Greece are so thankful; when sane they did little or nothing. As for Sibyl and others who by power of inspired prophecy have so often foretold the future to so many, and guided them aright, I need not dwell on the obvious to everyone. Yet it is in place to appeal to the fact that madness was accounted no shame no disgrace by the men of old who gave things their names; otherwise they would not have connected that greatest of arts, whereby the future is discerned, with this very word 'madness' and named it accordingly. No, it was because they held madness to be a valuable gift, when due to divine dispensation. (244b-c)

As we can see, the love which Plato speaks of is not something to be spoken of in terms of man's desire for knowledge. Love,

according to Plato, is a heaven-sent blessing that leads man to the realization of his participation in God. Plato does not understand the realization of the divine in terms of a historical beginning. By examining his writings carefully, we can see that he believes that there were people before his time who were possessed of this love. For example, in the following passage notice the way Plato speaks of the nobility and greatness of the past which has been forgotten by the men of his own day:

The men of today, have no sense of values, they put in an extra letter, making it not manic but mantic. That is borne out by the name they gave to the art of those same prophets who inquire into the future by means of birds and other signs; the name was "oiniostic," which by its components indicated that the prophet attained understanding and information by a purely human activity of thought belonging to his own intelligence, though a younger generation has come to call it "oionoistic" lengthening the quantity of the o to make it sound impressive. You see then what this ancient evidence attests. Corresponding to the superior perfection and value of the prophecy of inspiration over that of omen reading, both in name and in fact, is the superiority of heaven-sent madness over man-made snity. (244c-d)

For Plato, man cannot obtain knowledge of divine reality out of his own ability to reason. Although there is a connection between our ability to reason and the obtaining of knowledge, the illumination of this knowledge is totally dependent on the love which comes from God to man. Again, in the following lines Plato tells us that man's skill alone is not sufficient for obtaining knowledge:

This seizes a tender, virgin soul and stimulates it to rapt expression especially in lyric poetry, glorifying the countless mighty deeds of ancient times for the instruction in posterity. But if any man come to the gates of poetry without the madness of the Muses, persuaded

that skill alone will make him a good poet, then shall he and his works of sanity with him be brought to nought by the poetry of madness, and behold, their place is nowhere to be found. (245a)

As I have stated, Plato likens human existence to a fall from God. (248c) He speaks of the need for us to grow wings and fly back to the region of the divine from where we came. (246e) The madness of love, which is heaven-sent, allows us to take this flight, guiding us by reason to the place where true being dwells without colour or shape. (247c) It is by this gift of love that man beholds true knowledge and it is this madness that allows us to contemplate it. (247e)

As we can now see, Plato does not equate this love with man's desire for knowledge. I maintain that Voegelin's conception of philosophy, as arising out of man's existential desire for knowledge prevents him from seeing this. It restricts him from adequately penetrating to Plato's understanding of the love of wisdom.

Perhaps the greatest expression of how Plato understands this love in relation to philosophy is to be found in Republic VI. At (493c) Plato likens human society to a great and powerful beast. He tells us that the opinions that this beast has of reality are so deceptive and so powerfully misleading "that it knows nothing about which of its opinions and desires are honorable or base, good or evil, just or unjust. (493c) According to Plato, this great beast calls the things that please it good and the things that vexed it bad, having no other account to render of them. (493c)

The deception that is caused by this beast is so strong that Plato tells us that what is necessary to overcome it, is God's Grace. "You may be sure that, if anything is saved and turns out well in the present condition of society and government, in saying that the providence of God preserves it you will not be speaking ill. (493a)

According to Plato, it is the man who falls in love with God who becomes saved from the great beast. The philosopher, insofar as reality becomes illuminated to him by Grace is capable of seeing the deception of the great beast. The analogy which Plato uses to explain this is to be found in his discussion in the Republic of the "divided line." (507a-510e)

The divided line represents for Plato, the division between the things that we see through our eyes, and the things that we know in our souls. Plato tells us that though vision may be in our eyes and its possessor may try to use it, "without a third factor specifically and naturally adapted to this purpose, vision will see nothing." (507d-e) The third factor spoken of here is obviously the light of the sun. (508a) It is by the reality of the sun's light that we see anything. According to Plato, this light is what yokes together visibility and the faculty of sight. (508a) Without this light we cannot see; our vision is dependent totally on its reality.

Similarly, Plato tells us that in order to obtain knowledge of reality, our souls also need a third factor to illuminate this. This third factor is love, and this love is what leads man to what

is real. Love is what gives truth to the objects of knowledge. (508e)
 Just as the sun's light allows us to see, God's Grace allows us
 to know. (509b-c)

When Voegelin speaks of philosophy as arising out of man's existential desire for knowledge, he misunderstands what Plato means by this third factor. No matter how hard a man may desire knowledge, there is no guarantee he will obtain it. Similarly, no matter how hard one may try to look at something, without light to illuminate the object, it is impossible to see. I maintain that for Plato, God's Grace is a condition of philosophy, just as the sun's light is a condition for sight.

In saying that philosophy arises out of the love of God rather than man's existential desire for knowledge, I am not saying that man's desire for truth is not an important factor for philosophy. I am saying that in order to desire knowledge the love of God is a prerequisite and that this love is what compels the philosopher to desire truth. (511b)

In equating the love of wisdom with man's existential desire for knowledge, Voegelin prevents himself from adequately understanding Plato's conception of philosophy as arising out of Grace. We have seen that For Plato, love is a heaven sent madness that comes from God to man, and it is this madness that is the pathway to knowledge of divine reality.

Several concluding remarks are now in order. In the first chapter, we examined Voegelin's conception of political science

and its dependence on philosophy. We saw that for Voegelin, philosophy could not be separated from history insofar as a) its discovery illuminated for the first time in history the divine ground of human existence; and b) this knowledge made known to man an historical process in which God realizes itself in time.

Central to Voegelin's understanding of this process was his assumption that Plato was the founder of political science; that he was the first philosophical writer to distinguish and articulate what the discovery of philosophy meant for the understanding of human existence. He told us that in the event of philosophy what was discovered for the first time in history was the human soul, the sensorium where man experiences God. Prior to the discovery of philosophy, Voegelin argues that man had no soul insofar as he was yet to experience God. He writes that in the older mythological symbols of reality, what was depicted was a cosmos made up of many gods. With the discovery of the human soul and the realization of the one God of all reality, these older mythological symbols of reality are replaced by new philosophical concepts.

After examining Voegelin's understanding of the beginnings of philosophy, I then turned to a study of the influence Aristotle's philosophical concepts had on Voegelin's understanding of history. For Voegelin, Aristotle's philosophical concepts illuminated the historical dimension of philosophy insofar as they made clear a process in which the divine realized itself in time. It was Voegelin's intention to show, using Aristotle's philosophical concepts

that philosophy arose out of man's existential desire for truth. I felt it was necessary to examine the influence that Aristotle has had on Voegelin's understanding of philosophy insofar as I see it as a source of difficulty in his interpretations of Plato's writings.

In order to understand this difficulty, I then turned to passages from the Meno, Phaedrus, and Republic, where Plato speaks of the human soul in relation to knowledge. First I pointed out that in the Meno, Plato does not speak of the human soul in terms of an historical discovery. According to Plato, the soul of man is immortal and has always participated in God.

Secondly, I pointed out that by understanding philosophy only in terms of man's existential desire for truth, Voegelin misunderstands what Plato means by love (philos). Although desire is an essential component in the act of philosophizing, the love which is experienced in philosophy comes from God to man. Man's desire for knowledge is not necessarily the same experience as man's falling in love with God. Love comes to us, we do not necessarily come to it. Love is not something that can be hunted or sought by man. The conventional language of falling in love illuminates the truth of this experience.

In the Republic, we saw that for Plato, the overwhelming opinions of society prevent one from knowing the truth of reality. These opinions are so strong and powerful that Plato tells us that what is necessary for our salvation is God's saving Grace.

It is this love which come from God to man that makes philosophy possible.

Finally, I have shown that for Plato human existence is a fall from God. It is the forgetfulness on the part of man of the divine reality from whence he came. Love is the pathway that leads man back to God. It is that reality of the divine that illuminates man's participation in God. For Plato, love is very much connected with what God is. This love has always been the source and the cause of who and what we are. Plato does not understand this love in terms of an historical process of self-realization. Although he sees it as the cause of our own becoming, that which moves us to what we are fitted for, he does not understand love in relation to an historical event that illuminates for the first time in history man's participation in God. According to Plato, man has always known God. This is why in the Meno Plato speaks of knowledge in terms of recollection. Voegelin's assumption that God realizes itself in time, that the event of philosophy illuminates the discovery of the human soul and that history is the ongoing process in which we come to new knowledge of God, leads to his restricted insights into what Plato means by philosophy, the love which leads to wisdom.

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