

ERIC VOEGELIN'S CHANGING ACCOUNT OF GREEK RATIONALITY

ERIC VOEGELIN'S CHANGING ACCOUNT OF GREEK RATIONALITY:
ARISTOTELIAN *NOESIS* BEFORE AND AFTER THE PLATONIC *METAXY*

By

GERALD L. DAY, B. A. (Hons.)

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AUTHOR: Gerald L. Day, B.A. (Hons.)

(McGill University)

SUPERVISORY

COMMITTEE: Dr. Zdravko Planinc
Dr. P. Travis Kroeker
Dr. John C. Robertson

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ABSTRACT

Eric Voegelin's article "Reason: The Classic Experience" (1974) is perhaps his best known account of the Platonic-Aristotelian experience and symbolization of reason. Many interpreters have not recognized, however, that the account of the experiential origin and nature of reason developed in this work is significantly different than that which is found in *The New Science of Politics* (1952) and the first three volumes of *Order and History* (1956-1957).

In this thesis I show that there is an important change in Voegelin's account of Greek rationality. I illustrate the change by comparing Voegelin's account of Aristotelian *noesis* in *The New Science of Politics* and *Plato and Aristotle* with the account developed in *Anamnesis* (1966). I also develop an hypothesis to account for why the change came about. I suggest that Voegelin's reassessment of the nature and origin of the classic experience of reason is due principally to an important change in his understanding of Plato's philosophical anthropology.

"When the divine element in them began to diminish...
they became unable to bear their prosperity
and behaved unseemly.

To those who had eyes to see, they appeared ugly
for they were losing the most precious of their gifts.
But to those who had no eyes to discern the life of true
eudaimonia, they appeared most beautiful and happy
at this time when they were full of unjust will to power"

Critias, 121b
(Voegelin's translation)

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ABBREVIATIONS

Works by Eric Voegelin

- Anam.* *Anamnesis.* Gerhart Niemeyer, trans. & ed., (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1978).
- Anam. Ger.* *Anamnesis: Zur Theorie der Geschichte und Politik.* (Munich: R. Piper & Co. Verlag, 1966).
- AR* *Autobiographical Reflections.* E. Sandoz, ed., (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989).
- Conversations* *Conversations with Eric Voegelin.* E. O'Connor ed., (Montréal: Thomas More Institute, 1980).
- EESH* "Equivalences of Experience and Symbolization in History" (1970) in *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, Vol. 12. Ellis Sandoz, ed., (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), 115-133.
- FER* *From Enlightenment to Revolution.* J.H. Hallowell, ed., (Durham: Duke University Press, 1975).
- Gospel* "The Gospel and Culture" (1971) in *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, Vol. 12., 172-212.
- Immortality* "Immortality: Experience and Symbol" (1967) in *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, Vol. 12., 52-94.

- ISSR** "Industrial Society in Search of Reason" (1963) in *World Technology and Human Destiny*. R. Aron, ed., (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1963), 31-46.
- NSP** *The New Science of Politics: An Introduction*. (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987).
- OH I** *Order and History Vol. I: Israel and Revelation*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1956).
- OH II** *Order and History Vol. II: The World of the Polis*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1957).
- OH III** *Order and History Vol. III: Plato and Aristotle*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1957).
- OH IV** *Order and History Vol. IV: The Ecumenic Age*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1974).
- OH V** *Order and History Vol. V: In Search of Order*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1987).
- ODE** "On Debate and Existence" (1967) in *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, Vol. 12., 36-51.
- QDD** "Quod Deus Dicitur," in *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, Vol. 12., 376-394.
- Wisdom** "Wisdom and the Magic of the Extreme: A Meditation" (1983) in *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, Vol. 12., 315-75.

Translations

- Eth. Nic.* *Nicomachean Ethics.* H. Rackham, trans.,
(Cambridge: Harvard University Press,
1934).
- Gorgias* *Gorgias.* W. C. Helmbold, trans., (New
York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1952).
- Meta.* *Metaphysics.* I-IX: H. Tredennick, trans.;
X-XIV: H. Tredennick & G. Cyril Armstrong,
trans., (Cambridge: Harvard University
Press, 1933 & 1935).
- NE* *Nicomachean Ethics.* Martin Ostwald,
trans., (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill,
1962).
- Politics* *The Politics.* Carnes Lord, trans.,
(Chicago: University of Chicago Press,
1984).
- Republic* *The Republic* I & II. Paul Shorey, trans.,
(Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1937
& 1935).

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INTRODUCTION

In this thesis, I will be concerned with demonstrating an important, though frequently overlooked, theoretical change in Voegelin's account of the classic Greek philosophers, and I will suggest why this change occurred. It is important to note that in his writings Voegelin himself does not discuss any such change in his understanding. The development that I will present should not be confused, therefore, with either one of the two major theoretical shifts that Voegelin discusses explicitly. The two developments that Voegelin himself frequently refers to are: (1) his hermeneutical change from "ideas" to experiences and their symbolizations in history (*AR*, 62ff., 78ff.); and (2) his reformulation of the concept of history (*OH IV*, 1ff.). The change he does not mention is different: it concerns his understanding of the relation between reason and revelation.

Voegelin returns frequently to Platonic and Aristotelian texts when he discusses the origin and nature of reason. But the results of his return in the nineteen fifties are remarkably different from those of the mid-sixties and afterwards. In the fifties, Voegelin conceives of the Greek philosophers' rationality as a unilateral reaching out of the human *psychē* toward a divine reality that is "sensed" in its "radically nonhuman transcendence" but "never revealed." The Platonic-Aristotelian rational symbolism of divine reality is understood as remarkably different from the revelatory accounts of the Jews and Christians. In a letter to Leo Strauss dated 22 April 1951,

Voegelin claims that in his mythic dialogues, "Plato propounds no truth that had been revealed to him; he appears not to have had the experience of a prophetic address from God. Therefore no direct announcement."¹ Voegelin perceives an essential limitation in the Greek philosophical symbolization of reality, due principally to the one-sided nature of its human quest for the divine. As early as the mid-sixties, however, Voegelin claims that the philosophers' symbolic accounts of noetic reason actually point to the character of their experiences as a mutual participation of divine in human and human in divine reality. The classic philosophers are said to have been conscious of their reasoned search for truth in existence as an experiential movement of the soul. Moreover, the experience was symbolized as originating, Voegelin argues, in the divine attraction that ultimately grounds the soul's vision of the true order of being. Classical reason is thus comparable to revelation. Indeed, in his later understanding

Voegelin explicitly claims:

Going back to the Middle Ages you find distinctions between reason and revelation, natural and supernatural sources of knowledge, that no longer apply. In the fourth or fifth century in Greece, every Greek poet and philosopher knew that his experience of civilization was a revelation due not to natural reason but to something else...the noetic philosophy of Plato and Aristotle is just as

¹ Eric Voegelin, *Faith and Political Philosophy: The Correspondence Between Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin, 1934-1964*. Peter Emberley and Barry Cooper, trans. & ed., (University Park, Pa.: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), p. 87.

much a revelation as other revelations, including the Jewish type.²

The change in understanding is surprising. A thorough analysis of it would require discussion of all of Voegelin's writings concerning the Greeks and the Christians in the nineteen fifties and sixties—indeed a formidable project. However, the main features of the change can be demonstrated by means of an analysis of Voegelin's use of Aristotle. Aristotle's analyses of the intellect (*nous*) and the life of reason (*bios theoretikos*) in the "mature man" (*spoudaios*) are particularly important in all of Voegelin's major works where the nature of reason is discussed. I will focus specifically on Voegelin's changing usage of Aristotle in three of his texts: *The New Science of Politics* (1952), *Plato and Aristotle* (Vol. III of *Order and History*, 1957), and "What is Political Reality?" (1966), which was published in *Anamnesis*. After discussing these texts, I will suggest that the change in Voegelin's understanding came about primarily because of his further studies of Plato's philosophical anthropology. Voegelin does not offer any sustained analyses of Plato's *Symposium* or *Philebus* in his work of the nineteen fifties. Yet it is from these texts, in particular, that Voegelin formulates what is perhaps the definitive concept of his later philosophical anthropology, viz. his concept of the *metaxy*, or the "in-between" character of human existence. In particular, the understanding of the Platonic "spiritual man" (*diamonios aner*) that emerges in Voegelin's

² Elaine Cahn and Cathleen Going, eds., *The Question as Commitment: A Symposium*. (Montréal: Perry Printing Limited, 1979), p. 111.

conceptualization of the *metaxy* provides him with a conceptual basis from which he is able to declare ultimately that the classic Greek philosophers' accounts of noetic reason and the Judaeo-Christian accounts of pneumatic revelation are "equivalences" of experience and symbolization.

In the work of Voegelin's best known commentators the change in his account of Greek rationality is too frequently unobserved and, when recognized, its importance is often unacceptably depreciated. The change is not mentioned, for example, in William C. Harvard's discussion of "The Changing Pattern of Voegelin's Conception of History and Consciousness."³ Harvard writes about changes that Voegelin discusses himself. Nor is Voegelin's change one of the stages in Stephen A. McKnight's article on "The Evolution of Voegelin's Theory of Politics and History, 1944-1975."⁴ Neither is the change acknowledged by any of the commentators in the collection of essays entitled *Eric Voegelin's Significance for the Modern Mind*.⁵

When Voegelin's account of reason is discussed at all, it is usually described only in terms of his later understanding. This tends to make Voegelin appear deceptively

³ William C. Harvard, "The Changing Pattern of Voegelin's Conception of History and Consciousness." *Southern Review*, 7 (1971): 49-67.

⁴ In *Eric Voegelin's Search for Order in History*, Expanded Edition. Stephen A. McKnight, ed., (New York: University Press of America, 1987), pp. 26-45.

⁵ Ellis Sandoz, ed., *Eric Voegelin's Significance for the Modern Mind*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991.

consistent in his general estimation of Greek rationality. Consequently, when the change is not recognized explicitly subsequent interpreters are in danger of reading Voegelin's later account of noetic reason back into his earlier works. For example, the consistency of Voegelin's account of Greek rationality might easily be misjudged in this way when reading James L. Wiser's otherwise excellent comparison of Voegelin and Leo Strauss.⁶ Although Wiser's comparison cites textual sources from all periods of Voegelin's work, his understanding of Voegelin's account of Greek rationality is taken exclusively from work written in the nineteen seventies and afterwards. This leads Wiser to state that "Voegelin has argued consistently that the medieval distinction between natural reason and divine revelation was an error from its very inception."⁷ In fact, Voegelin did not argue this point consistently. In his work of the fifties, Voegelin was quite willing to separate the experiences of Greek rationality and Christian revelation. He even based his distinction upon one medieval thinker in particular, namely, St. Thomas Aquinas.⁸

The possibility of a similar misunderstanding is not abated by Dante

⁶ James L. Wiser, "Reason and Revelation as Search and Response: A Comparison of Eric Voegelin and Leo Strauss," in *Faith and Political Philosophy*, pp. 237-48.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 243.

⁸ In the fifties Voegelin's separation of Greek philosophy and Christian theology is conducted in basic agreement with Etienne Gilson. Voegelin wrote to Leo Strauss on 22 April 1951, "I would be prepared to distinguish classical from Christian metaphysics, to accept to a considerable degree the position of Gilson, his *Esprit de la philosophie médiévale*" (*Faith and Political Philosophy*, 83f.).

Germino's article on "Eric Voegelin's *Anamnesis*."⁹ Here, in his analysis of the work in which the change in Voegelin's account of Greek rationality first appears, Germino does not recognize it. At most, he calls for a "further elaboration of how [Voegelin] conceives the relationship of reason and revelation and of philosophy and theology."¹⁰

The making of an overly consistent Voegelin, with specific regard to his estimation of Greek rationality, is especially problematic in the work of Ellis Sandoz. Sandoz is aware of a change in Voegelin's account of the classic philosophers. Regrettably, he diminishes the importance of Voegelin's shift by according it only the briefest mention in a footnote of his major work on Voegelin's thought.¹¹ Sandoz quotes a passage from *The New Science of Politics* where Voegelin, citing Aristotle, claims that the Greeks, in contrast to the Christians, did not experience *philia* (friendship) with the gods due to the radical inequality of humanity and divinity. Sandoz goes on to say: "This contrast between the Classical and Christian truth and the attendant terminology were subsequently dropped by Voegelin."¹² The reader is then referred to *Order and History* III (1957) and "The Gospel and Culture" (1971), apparently as proof of the

⁹ Dante Germino, "Eric Voegelin's *Anamnesis*." *Southern Review*, 7 (1971): 68-88.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 85.

¹¹ Ellis Sandoz, *The Voegelinian Revolution*. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981).

¹² *Ibid.*, 104, n11.

change. However, only the latter text is quoted by Sandoz in the footnote. By 1971, Voegelin had indeed abandoned his earlier separation of Greek rational and Christian revelatory types of truth. But Sandoz is wrong to imply that the change had already occurred in 1957, *i.e.* in Voegelin's major study of *Plato and Aristotle*.

In the fifties, Voegelin still found the classic Greek philosophers' rational accounts of ultimate reality inferior to Christian revelatory accounts of the same. Indeed, it was for this reason that Stanley Rosen strongly criticized *Order and History* III. Rosen criticizes Voegelin for "trivializ[ing] philosophy" by prejudging Greek thought "as a defective preliminary vision of historical and metaphysical truth. Just as Christ completes the Greek vision in 'existential' terms, so Thomas Aquinas remedies the faults of Greek theory."¹³

Elsewhere, Sandoz describes the change in Voegelin's account of the classic philosophical tradition merely as a "qualification" of his earlier willingness to keep rational and revelatory types of truth separate.¹⁴ This is certainly a curious understatement of a development that allowed Voegelin eventually to declare the essential

¹³ Stanley Rosen, "Order and History," *Review of Metaphysics*. 12 (1958-59), pp. 257-76. Rosen is silent about Voegelin's later interpretation of Greek rationality. See, *e.g.*, his conspicuously brief "Politics or Transcendence? Responding to Historicism," in *Faith and Political Philosophy*, pp. 261-66. Here Rosen continues to interpret Voegelin only in terms of his earlier understanding of Greek rationality.

¹⁴ Ellis Sandoz, "Medieval Rationalism or Mystic Philosophy? Reflections on the Strauss-Voegelin Correspondence," in *Faith and Political Philosophy*, pp. 297-319 (esp. pp. 306f.). See also the comments made by Sandoz in his Introduction to *In Search of Order* (OH V, 9).

equivalence of the experiences motivating Greek rational and Christian revelatory accounts of reality. Sandoz depreciates Voegelin's resolution of the rational and revelatory "Ways of Truth" that Voegelin himself recognized as "the fundamental issue of Western intellectual history from the blending of Hellenism and Christianity to the present" (*OH II*, 219).

A noteworthy exception among commentaries is found in Eugene Webb's article, "Eric Voegelin's Theory of Revelation."¹⁵ Webb does not simply repeat what Voegelin has already said better himself. Rather, he engages the substance of Voegelin's thought in a critical, yet sympathetic manner. Although Webb is not concerned primarily with Voegelin's account of Greek rationality, he notices the change in Voegelin's account and accords it more than a cursory treatment:

In the earlier volumes of *Order and History* Voegelin tended to use the terms "Reason" and "Revelation" for the disclosures of being to the Hellenic philosophers and the Israelite religious thinkers respectively. In *The Ecumenic Age*, however, he shifted to different terms for these two leaps in being, thereby making clearer that both are theophanic events and have the character of ontological disclosure: "noetic" and "pneumatic" differentiation.¹⁶

Despite this noticeable improvement, Webb is not attempting to resolve the problem of anachronistic readings of Voegelin's account of Greek rationality. Accordingly, he gives

¹⁵ Eugene Webb, "Eric Voegelin's Theory of Revelation," in *Eric Voegelin's Thought: A Critical Appraisal*. Ellis Sandoz, ed. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1982), pp. 157-77.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 163.

no account of the specific nature and implications of the change in Voegelin's understanding, formulated for the first time in "What is Political Reality?" (1966).

The need for interpreters to be aware of the difference in Voegelin's early and later accounts of Platonic-Aristotelian rationality becomes particularly crucial when we consider that Voegelin's most well known statement on the nature of classic rationality, namely, "Reason: The Classic Experience" (1974), was written well after the change had occurred. And his most comprehensive accounts of classic philosophy, volumes II and III of *Order and History* (1957), were published several years before the change had occurred. In what follows, I will attempt to illustrate the specific nature and implications of the change in Voegelin's account of classical rationality. I will also develop an hypothesis suggesting why the change came about. Let us turn now to consider Voegelin's understanding of Greek rationality in the nineteen fifties. To the best of my knowledge, there are no available analyses of his understanding of Greek rationality from this period. Hence, I will devote the largest portion of this thesis to explicating the substance of Voegelin's account in the fifties, since this is the least known period of his account of reason. It is also the period into which many commentators read Voegelin's later account unknowingly or apologetically.

CHAPTER ONE:
The New Science of Politics (1952)

The Need for "Rethoretization" in the Social Sciences

The New Science of Politics is an introductory work, although it appears approximately midway in Voegelin's academic career. Its introductory character can be seen on two important levels. First, as the initial articulation of Voegelin's theoretical search for experiences rather than ideas in history, *The New Science of Politics* introduces Voegelin's explicit analyses in *Order and History* of the engendering experiences behind linguistic symbols.

On the second level of introduction, we discover Voegelin's explicit intention to introduce his readers to the twentieth century movement toward "rethoretization" in the social and human sciences. In Voegelin's account, the need to rethink the theoretical structure of modern political science arose as an attempt to recover "from the destruction of science which characterized the positivistic era in the second half of the nineteenth century" (*NSP*, 4). Voegelin seems to have had first-hand knowledge of escaping from an ideologically restricted approach to the social sciences. As W. C. Harvard has noted, Voegelin began his intellectual quest from a philosophical position that is not essentially different from the unexamined first premises of contemporary "behavioral scientists." For example, in 1927, while serving as an assistant to Professor Hans Kelsen, Voegelin published a salutary article on Kelsen's neo-Kantian and positivistic "Pure Theory of

Law." Voegelin wrote:

By transferring the legal system into an ideal realm of meanings and reducing it to an instrument Kelsen destroys any undue respect for existing legal institutions. The content of law is shown to be what it is: not an eternal sacred order, but a compromise of battling social forces—and this content may be changed every day by the chosen representatives of the people according to the wishes of their constituents without fear of endangering a divine law.¹⁷

But what was it that Voegelin later found to be particularly destructive in the positivist account of reality? Were not the positivists highly rational in their quest for science?

In *The New Science of Politics*, Voegelin avoids defining positivism exclusively "as the doctrine of this or that positivistic thinker...for instance, in terms of the system of Comte" (*NSP*, 7). He does this so that a particular form of positivism does not obscure the general positivist principle, which he intends to isolate and criticize: the attempt to make "political science (and the social sciences in general) 'objective' through a methodologically rigorous exclusion of all 'value-judgments'" (*Ibid.*, 11).

The positivist approach to science assumed, in Voegelin's account, "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" (*Ibid.*, 4). The positivist approach assumed, furthermore, that the methods of the natural sciences were

¹⁷ William C. Harvard, "The Changing Pattern of Voegelin's Conception of History and Consciousness," *The Southern Review*. 7 (1971), p. 52.

"a criterion for theoretical relevance in general." And from the combination of these two assumptions followed "the well-known series of assertions that a study of reality could qualify as scientific only if it used the methods of the natural sciences, that problems couched in other terms were illusionary problems," and that metaphysical questions in particular were to be excluded from the scope of scientific inquiry (*Ibid.*). The "subjective values" of an actual human being were thereby excluded from the field of rational discussion as they were deemed inherently incapable of offering anything beyond one's prejudiced, irrational opinions. Consequently, reason could be viewed only as the human capacity for quantifying external reality as it is known exclusively through the senses.

Voegelin argues that one finds "the key to the understanding of positivistic destructiveness" particularly in the aforementioned formal reduction of the scientific scope to the methods of the natural sciences. To claim that the methods of the natural sciences are *the* criterion for scientific knowledge in general is, according to Voegelin, to subordinate theoretical relevance to method and to pervert thereby the meaning of science on principle (*Ibid.*, 4). In other words, the positivist restriction of the scope of knowledge to how one knows the external world limits all science to technique and denies the possibility of theoretical science. But what, we may ask, does Voegelin understand as the legitimate scope of scientific inquiry?

Voegelin contends that "science" is properly understood as "a search for truth concerning the nature of the various realms of being" (*Ibid.*, 4). It is "a truthful account

of the structure of reality...the theoretical orientation of man in his world," and the "great instrument for man's understanding of his own position in the universe." The scientific account of reality starts from the prescientific existence of an actual human being, "from his participation in the world with his body, soul, intellect, and spirit, from his primary grip on all the realms of being that is assured to him because his own nature is their epitome." Thus, questions pertaining to the best forms of social organization and human nature are legitimately incorporated into science, since human beings know themselves as participants in all aspects of the encompassing reality. From one's basic knowledge of being a participant, socially and personally, in the mystery of being human "rises the arduous way, the *methodos*, toward the dispassionate gaze on the order of being in the theoretical attitude." Whatever contributes to the success of the scientific quest, thus understood, Voegelin finds to be relevant. He is certainly not contesting the relevance of facts and methods on principle: "Facts are relevant in so far as their knowledge contributes to the study of essence, while methods are adequate in so far as they can be effectively used as a means for this end" (*Ibid.*, 5). Science, therefore, is the study of being in all of its manifestations.

All of this should be obvious. Yet, due to what he calls the positivist "disregard for elementary verities," Voegelin finds that it has become necessary in our times "to elaborate the obvious." Some consolation is offered, however, as he reminds the reader that the twentieth century situation is not completely anomalous. The blatant disregard for elementary truths, according to Voegelin, "is a perennial problem in the

history of science, for even Aristotle had to remind certain pests of his time that an 'educated man' will not expect exactness of the mathematical type in a treatise on politics" (*Ibid.*).¹⁸

Voegelin criticizes the attempt to distinguish between so-called "objective facts" and "subjective values" as a "positivistic conceit" that can be accepted only by thinkers who have not mastered the scientific anthropology of classical Greek and Christian thinkers: "For neither classic nor Christian ethics and politics contain 'value-judgements' but elaborate, empirically and critically, the problems of order which derive from philosophical anthropology as part of a general ontology." The pervasive discussion of "values" as uncritical opinions or beliefs in contrast to scientific "facts" is a characteristically modern phenomenon. As Voegelin observes, "the terms 'value-judgment' and 'value-free' science were not part of the philosophical vocabulary before the second half of the nineteenth century" (*Ibid.*, 11*f.*). But what does the modern loss of rational standards by which to assess the truth of opinions reveal? "Only when ontology as a science was lost," Voegelin suggests, "and when consequently ethics and politics could no longer be understood as sciences of the order in which human nature reaches its maximal actualization, was it possible for this realm of knowledge to become

¹⁸ The Aristotelian passage to which Voegelin is referring is found in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Aristotle says that "a well-schooled man is one who searches for that degree of precision in each kind of study which the nature of the subject at hand admits: it is obviously just as foolish to accept arguments of probability from a mathematician as to demand strict demonstrations from an orator" (*NE*, 1094b23*ff.*). A similar admonition is offered in *Metaphysics* 995a1-20.

suspect as a field of subjective, uncritical opinion" (*Ibid.*, 12). Hence, the eclipse of the scientific study of being lies at the heart of the positivist confusion. But what does Voegelin find to have precipitated the twentieth century move toward the recovery of political theory from the positivistic reduction of science?

Voegelin praises Max Weber for his desire to move social scientific debate "beyond methodological squabbles" in order to reconsider a broader order of relevance: Weber "wanted science because he wanted clarity about the world in which he passionately participated; he was headed again on the road toward essence." Consequently, Voegelin sees Weber "as a thinker between the end and a new beginning," *i.e.* between the end of positivism and the new beginning of retheoretization in the social sciences (*Ibid.*, 14). But in what particular sense does Voegelin understand Weber's work to have provided such an impetus for the recovery of political theory? And what can be seen in Voegelin's assessment of Weber that will help to clarify Voegelin's understanding of reason in this period?

Weber was a very good positivist. He took seriously the distinction between "objective facts" and "subjective values" in his attempt to create a completely "value-free" social science. Voegelin recounts that Weber accorded to "values" the status of "'demonic' decisions beyond rational argument." A value-free science meant to Weber, therefore, "the exploration of causes and effects, the construction of ideal types that would permit distinguishing regularities of institutions as well as deviations from them, and especially the construction of typical causal relations" (*Ibid.*, 14). As such, the basic

premises of a rational science of political order were themselves beyond the scope of scientific inquiry, for these are beyond an instrumental mode of reasoning.

Weber's empiricism could not reveal to anyone, whenever the questions arose, whether it was better to be, *e.g.*, "an economic liberal or a socialist, a democratic constitutionalist or a Marxist revolutionary." For the suggestion that one of these "value systems" was better than the others would entail a retreat into the irrationality of the political scientist's personal "values." And all "values" were considered equal in their irrationality. In Voegelin's understanding, Weber's value-free science could reveal only the consequences of translating one's particular "values" into political practice (*Ibid.*, 14). Weber could teach only by "indirection because he shunned an explicit statement of positive principles of order." But Voegelin questions the legitimating purpose behind the mere dissemination of uncritical information (data) to Weber's university students: "Could it perhaps have the indirect effect of inviting the students to revise their values when they realized what unsuspected, and perhaps undesired, consequences their political ideas would have in practice?" If this were indeed the case, then the "values" of the students would be revealed as truly amenable to reason; "[a]n appeal to judgment would be possible, and what could a judgment that resulted in reasoned preference of value over value be but a value-judgment? Were reasoned value-judgments possible after all?" (*Ibid.*, 16).

Indeed, "values" had to be readmitted to the sphere of rational debate by twentieth century theorists since Weber's own work, according to Voegelin, "had reduced

the principle of a value-free science *ad absurdum*" (*Ibid.*, 20). Voegelin declares that Weber managed to escape the degradation of political science as "an apology for the dubious fancies of political intellectuals" by the mere fact of his search for social science: "The rational conflict with the unquestionable values of political intellectuals was inherent in his enterprise of an objective science of politics" (*Ibid.*, 17). The search for "objectivity" implies a desire for truth, *i.e.* the truth of "facts" in contrast with unsubstantiated opinions. This far, Voegelin declares that the desire behind the search for "objective" truth actually had a beneficial effect: "In so far as the attack on value-judgments was an attack on uncritical opinion under the guise of political science, it had the wholesome effect of theoretical purification" (*Ibid.*, 12). But insofar as truth is not an object, it was not long before the desire for "objectivity" in political science itself was recognized as a subjective "value," and that a "value-free" science of human affairs is indeed an impossibility. How did this come about?

Voegelin argues that Weber's science could be constituted as "value-free" only in relation to a defining "value." This suggests that "values" must indeed be an integral and inescapable part of political reality for which a science of politics must be able to account. Voegelin formulates the resulting theoretical difficulty in the following manner:

The idea of a value-free science whose object would be constituted by "reference to a value" could be realized only under the condition that a scientist was willing to decide on a "value" for reference. If the scientist refused to decide on a "value," if he treated all "values" as equal (as Max Weber did), if, moreover, he treated them as social facts among others—then there were no "values" left which

could constitute the object of science, because they had become part of the object itself (*Ibid.*, 20f.).

In other words, Weber's desire to be "value-free" or "objective" was itself an implicit "value" or preference for which an ostensibly "value-free" social science could not give a reasoned account. As a result, it became clear that an historically constant and important aspect of political reality was being ignored by the supposedly highly rational investigators purporting to render a scientific account of political reality.

Voegelin finds that in the work of Max Weber the immanent logic of the positivist attempt to remove "values" from the sphere of rational assessment came to its end. But it must be stressed that the preceding critique of positivism is what Voegelin extracts from Weber's work. Voegelin found in Weber, to the latter's credit, a reluctant positivist. Weber "knew what he wanted but somehow could not break through to it. He saw the promised land but was not permitted to enter it" (*Ibid.*, 22). Nevertheless, the unpromising land in which he remained was not worsened by his continued presence. According to Voegelin, Weber's work did not lead him to relativism or anarchism because "he was a staunch ethical character and in fact (as the biography of his nephew, Eduard Baumgarten, has brought out) a mystic. So he knew what was right without knowing the reasons for it" (*AR*, 12). But, of course, this is neither a common nor reliable method for political scientists.

The explicit recovery of theoretical principles with which to assess "values" reasonably is the work of political theorists after Weber. It is this work that Voegelin

intends to continue. Although Voegelin suggests that the immanent logic of positivism came to an end in Weber's work, he is not suggesting that this was also the end of Weber's positivism. The results of Weber's work remained ambiguous for Voegelin; the new theory toward which Weber was moving "could not become explicit because he religiously observed the positivistic taboo on metaphysics" (*NSP*, 21). Weber's search for truth concerning the order of political reality "could not advance to the contemplation of order. The *ratio* of science extended, for Weber, not to the principles but only to the causality of action" (*Ibid.*, 14).

The "*ratio* of science" that Voegelin has in mind is the Thomistic *ratio aeterna* (*cf.*, *Ibid.*, 6). In contrast to the freely scientific *ratio* of Thomas, Weber still believed, according to Voegelin, that it was possible to escape into "a type of rationalism which relegated religion and metaphysics into the realm of the 'irrational.'" Weber conceived of history as an increase of rationalism in the positivist and progressivist sense (*Ibid.*, 22, 23). But he could do this, Voegelin observes, only by omitting from his voluminous studies on the sociology of religion any substantive discussion of pre-Reformation Christianity and classical Greek philosophy. The reason for the omission seems obvious to Voegelin:

One can hardly engage in a serious study of medieval Christianity without discovering among its "values" the belief in a rational science of human and social order and especially of natural law. Moreover, this science was not simply a belief, but it was actually elaborated as a work of reason. Here Weber would have run into the fact of a

science of order, just as he would if he had seriously occupied himself with Greek philosophy (*Ibid.*, 20).

Voegelin recognizes that Weber's rationalism was not that of Comte. The father of positivism still hoped for a wondrous flowering of humanity in its constant evolution toward the rationality of positive science. For Weber, however, Voegelin relates that the ostensibly continuous progress toward positive science became "a process of disenchantment (*Entzauberung*) and de-divinization (*Entgöttlichung*) of the world." In contrast to the joyous *ratio* of Thomas, Weber had to resign himself to "rationalism as a fate to be borne but not desired" (*Ibid.*, 22). And, in contrast to Weber, Voegelin appears to be decidedly *religiös musikalisch*. Thus Voegelin is able to concentrate his exegetical efforts to recover the origin and nature of "reason" particularly in the areas of historical reality that were ignored by Weber, *viz.* the Platonic-Aristotelian account of *noesis* and the Thomistic *ratio aeterna*.

Voegelin's Return to the Aristotelian Science of Human Affairs

The change in Voegelin's interpretive focus from political "ideas" in history to the experiences that have engendered language symbols of right social and personal order was precipitated, in part, by his study of Aristotle. Voegelin credits Aristotle with having been the first thinker to have explicitly linked anthropological theorizing with experience. According to Voegelin, Aristotle recognized (1) that a theoretical account of human being is not simply anyone's opining about the nature of human existence; and (2) that it is rather "an attempt at formulating the meaning of existence by explicating the content of a definite class of experiences." Theoretical argumentation will not be arbitrary, therefore, but will derive its validity "from the aggregate of experiences to which it must permanently refer for empirical control" (*NSP*, 64). It should be obvious that Voegelin is not an empiricist in the positivist sense. Voegelin's use of the word "empirical" covers a broader range of experiences than what can be known only from the senses.¹⁹ But what types of experiences, we may ask, fall into the "definite class" of

¹⁹ Voegelin is using the word "empirical" non-restrictively as it is derived from the Greek word *empeiros*, meaning "experienced in" or "acquainted with." The nature of the experience symbolized in *empeiros* is not suggestive of a limitation to that which is known exclusively through the senses. The Greeks had a different word for exclusively sense perceptive types of experience: *aisthēsis*, from the verb *aisthanomai*, meaning "to perceive" or apprehend by the senses. Aristotle states explicitly the difference between *empeiros* and *aisthēsis*. In his *Metaphysics*, we find that "it is through experience [*empeiria*] that men acquire science [*epistēmē*] and technical skill" (981a). None of the senses (*tōn aisthēseōn*) are considered to be wisdom (*sophian*): "They are indeed our chief sources of knowledge about particulars [*gnōseis*], but they do not tell us the reason for anything, as for example why fire is hot, but only that it is hot" (981b10ff.).

which theory is an attempted explication?

Voegelin recognizes that a comprehensive account of the experiences that classical theorists have articulated is well beyond the intended scope of *The New Science of Politics*. No more than "a brief catalogue" is given, which is intended to appeal to his readers' historical knowledge. First, Voegelin notes that the word "*philosophos*" itself points to the experiences of truth in the soul of one who is orientated lovingly toward wisdom (*sophon*). Voegelin reminds his readers that Plato, as a philosopher, "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*" (*Ibid.*, 63).²⁰ In addition to the experience of the philosopher's love of wisdom, Voegelin recalls a number of other classic symbols of philosophical experience:

the variants of the Platonic Eros toward the *kalon* [beautiful] and the *agathon* [good], as well as the Platonic Dike [justice], the virtue of right superordination and subordination of the forces in the soul...and, above all, there must be included the experience of Thanatos, of death, as the cathartic experience of the soul which purifies conduct by placing it into the longest of all long-range perspectives
(*Ibid.*, 65).

To the three fundamental forces in the soul—*i.e.* Thanatos (death), Eros (loving desire), and Dike (justice)—Voegelin adds Plato's exploratory accounts of the soul's height and

²⁰ The account in Plato's *Phaedrus* (278d-e) and several Heraclitean fragments (B 35, B 40, B 50, B 108) are offered as textual support of Voegelin's attempt to recover the meaning of the term "philosophy."

depth. The philosopher scales the dimension of the soul's height "through the mystical ascent, over the *via negativa*, toward the border of transcendence" in the *Symposium*; and the soul's depth "is probed through the anamnestic descent into the unconscious, into the depth from where are drawn up the 'true logoi' of the *Timaeus* and *Critias*" (*Ibid.*, 66). In his account of the soul's depth, Voegelin relates that Plato could draw upon and further differentiate experiences that had already been symbolized by Heraclitus and Æschylus. Furthermore, in his account of the soul's height, "Plato could draw on the mysteries as well as on the description of the way toward truth that Parmenides had given in his didactic poem" (*Ibid.*). Finally Voegelin mentions, "as close to the Platonic range," the Aristotelian *philia* (friendship, love) as "the experiential nucleus of true community between mature men," and the Aristotelian *nous* (intellect, reason) as the true nature of humanity. The socially communicative dimension in the Aristotelian *nous* is said to harken, in turn, "back to the Heraclitean followership of the common Logos of mankind" (*Ibid.*). Once again, in this context Voegelin intends merely to offer hints as to the type of experiences for which a theorist attempts to give an account.

Due to the particular nature of theory as the explication of the truth experienced in the philosopher's soul, Voegelin is compelled to acknowledge certain communicative limitations. Theory will be intelligible, Voegelin observes,

only to those in whom the explication will stir up parallel experiences as the empirical basis for testing the truth of theory. Unless a theoretical exposition activates the corresponding experiences at least to a degree, it will create the impression of empty talk or will perhaps be rejected as

an irrelevant expression of subjective opinions (*NSP*, 64f.).

In other words, the truth of the philosopher's symbols is not informative; it is evocative (*cf.*, *Wisdom*, 344). Voegelin, following Aristotle, seeks to penetrate beyond the level of uncritical opinion in order to formulate theoretical principles of right psychological and political order. Accordingly, the "parallel experiences" to which Voegelin refers cannot be imaginary fabrications, but must be symbolizations of intelligible, shared experiences that a person of sufficient maturity will be able to acknowledge and discuss. Voegelin writes:

When Aristotle wrote his *Ethics* and *Politics*, when he constructed his concepts of the polis, of the constitution, of the citizen, the various forms of government, of justice, of happiness, etc., he did not invent these terms and endow them with arbitrary meanings; he took rather the symbols which he found in his social environment, surveyed with care the variety of meanings which they had in common parlance, and ordered and clarified these meanings by the criteria of his theory (*NSP*, 28).²¹

The non-arbitrary, experiential ground of theoretical discussion that Voegelin acknowledges suggests a commonality of experience not unlike that to which Socrates points in his discussion with Callicles, who attempted to avoid personal suffering by loving tyranny:

²¹ Voegelin refers the reader to Aristotle's *Politics* (1280a7ff.) in support of these claims. Voegelin could have found further support for his understanding of language as a symbolization of experiences from Aristotle's work *On Interpretation*. Herein the philosopher says, "Words spoken are symbols [*symbola*] of experiences [*pathemata*] of the soul [*psyche*]; written words are the signs of words spoken" (16a).

Callicles, if human beings did not have certain feelings [*pathema*] in common (though they may vary a bit from man to man), if each of us had merely his own private sensations unshared by the rest, it would not be easy to demonstrate to another what one feels. I say this with reference to the fact that at the moment you and I are both experiencing somewhat the same emotion (*Gorgias*, 481c-d).

This should not imply that Voegelin understands theoretical argumentation as a simple matter of pointing out the implications of common human experiences in language. After all, it is well known that Callicles was not convinced by Socrates' persuasion. Voegelin is well aware that "theory has no argument against a man who feels, or pretends to feel, unable of re-enacting the experience" that theoretical discussion attempts to explicate (*NSP*, 65). In the words of Heraclitus, although "the Logos is common," the many still wish to live "as if they had a wisdom of their own" (B2). A parallel dichotomy between waking and dreaming reality emerges, furthermore, in the Ionian philosopher's differentiation of this public-private tension: "Those who are awake have a world [*kosmos*] one and common, but those who are asleep each turn aside into their private worlds" (B89)(*OH II*, 232).

These Heraclitean statements point to a curious empirical observation regarding "the many" that Voegelin also encountered in trying to conduct rational discussions in public. Voegelin notes that Heraclitus identified public life as having the character of commonality: all participate to some degree in the common Logos of humanity (*NSP*, 28). Truth is known publicly through speech. But when the public

reality of truth is reduced to the private realm of personal opinion, one result is that "the many" are seen, by the philosophers who remain open to the broader community of discussion, as dreamers each turning aside to their own private worlds of opinion. The positivists' recent attempt to remove the discussion of "values" from the public sphere of reasoned accountability is certainly one example of such a turning aside. And the Heraclitean insights suggest that the modern, ostensibly liberal attempts to relegate all symbolic expressions of right political order to the realm of "subjective," uncritical opinion amount to little more than talking in one's sleep.

These critical observations bring us to some practical corollaries that Voegelin notes pertaining to the cultivation of theoretical reflection and science. Theory is practically non-egalitarian; it "cannot be developed under all conditions by everybody" (*Ibid.*, 64). In a later work Voegelin states concisely his understanding of Aristotle's empirical observations regarding the different manifestations of human types in political reality: "men are unequal in actualizing their equal natures; the structure of society is in fact, for unknown reasons, hierarchical and not equalitarian, and we know of no way of changing this situation" (*ISSR*, 38). Thus, theory can be developed only, (a) when one experiences a desire for knowledge and recognizes that the type of knowledge sought will be gained only by penetrating a mass of uncritical opinions in order to reach an essential and critical discussion of theoretical principles, (b) when one has an economic basis that will allow one to devote years of work to theoretical studies, and (c) when one lives in a social environment that does not suppress those who engage in such studies (*NSP*, 64).

We have seen that Voegelin considers Max Weber's attempt to create a "value-free" science to be one example of a reasoned search for social scientific knowledge that ultimately fell short of developing a truly reasoned and theoretical science of order. But what, we may ask, can be found in Voegelin's account that describes the theoretical search for critical principles of order reaching full maturity?

Voegelin argues that Aristotle's *spoudaios*, or "mature man," is one whose character has been sufficiently formed by the aggregate of experiences conducive to the development of theory. Voegelin finds that the *spoudaios* is one who has "maximally actualized the potentialities of human nature, who has formed his character into habitual actualization of the dianoetic [intellectual] and ethical virtues, the man who at the fullest of his development is capable of the *bios theoretikos* [life of reason]." Accordingly, the truly theoretical debate that Voegelin is describing "can be conducted only among *spoudaioi* in the Aristotelian sense" (*NSP*, 64, 65).

By introducing these Aristotelian terms, Voegelin is appealing to his readers' historical knowledge. I must therefore defer my analysis of specific questions that arise—concerning, *e.g.*, the relations of the *spoudaios*, the philosopher and the polis—to my discussion of Voegelin's later analyses of the texts from which these terms are taken. To this point, I have attempted only to isolate the two types of rationality most frequently discussed by Voegelin: the characteristically modern inability to conduct a rational discussion of "values," which Voegelin found exemplified in Max Weber's work, and the

suggested ability of Aristotle's "mature man" to attain a degree of rationality which allowed for the formulation of theoretical principles of right psychological and political order. Recognizing the contrast between these two types of rationality is central to understanding how Voegelin distinguishes classic and medieval rationality from modern rationalism.

As my analysis of Voegelin's early account of Greek rationality develops I will pay close attention to his understanding of the Aristotelian *bios theoretikos*. No further explicit analysis of the life of reason is given in *The New Science of Politics*. However, in his discussion of a few pages from Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*, Voegelin does indicate that he understands the Aristotelian experience of *nous* to be a type of participation between human and divine reality. He states, furthermore, that Aristotle's particular understanding of the relation between human beings and the divine can be accepted as representative of Greek thought generally. So we must discern, on the level of experience, Voegelin's early understanding of the nature of the Aristotelian participation. To this end, I will consider the relationship between Voegelin's three types of truth and the three types of theology that he finds in St. Augustine's *City of God*.

Voegelin's Three Types of Truth and the *theologia tripartita*

Voegelin claims that, in his *City of God*, Augustine reclassifies the tripartite division of theology formulated by Marcus Terentius Varro (*NSP*, 81). The Latin text from which Augustine cites this classification is the second part of Varro's *Antiquitates rerum humanarum et divinarum*.²² Augustine recounts that Varro had distinguished between three kinds of theology: mythical, political, and physical. Mythical theology is that of the poets; political theology refers to that practiced by the people in the civic temples; and physical theology is that which is formulated specifically by philosophers. In Augustine's Latin, "mythical" is translated as "fabulous, since the Greek *mythos* is the same as the Latin *fabula*"; and the "physical" (*physicon*) theology of the philosophers becomes "natural" (*naturalis*).²³

²² Although this text is now lost, Werner Jaeger relates that it is "quoted and analysed by St. Augustine so extensively that modern philology has been able to attempt a partial reconstruction of the work." See Werner Jaeger, *The Theology of the Early Greek Philosophers*. Edward S. Robinson, trans., (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1947), 192, n. 3. In 1952, Voegelin had already suspected that the *theologia tripartita* did not originate with Varro (*NSP*, 81). By 1957, Voegelin credits Panaetius (c. 180-110) with the development of the classification (*OH II*, 8).

²³ Augustine, *City of God*. G.G. Walsh, D.B. Zema, G. Monahan, and D.J. Honan, trans., (New York: Image Books, Doubleday, 1958), p. 128. Jaeger has noted that Augustine was one of the first thinkers to replace the Greek word *physicos* by the Latin *naturalis* (*op. cit.*, 4). Jaeger cautions, in addition, "that to translate the word φύσις by our word 'nature' or φύσικός by 'natural philosopher', fails to do justice to the Greek meaning and is definitely wrong. φύσις is one of those abstract formations with the suffix -σις which become fairly frequent after the period of the later epics. It denotes quite plainly the act of φῦναι—the process of growth and emergence; that is why the Greeks often use it with a genitive, as in φύσις τῶν ὄντων—the origin and growth of

Augustine's principle modification of Varro's types of theology, according to Voegelin, is seen in his treatment of fabulous theology as part of political theology (*Ibid.*). Augustine himself contends that "when Varro tried to distinguish political theology from the mythical and natural, he merely meant that it was something fashioned out of the other two rather than a third, distinct, and separate thing."²⁴ Augustine claims that Varro attempted to differentiate political theology as a mean between the vulgarity of the poets and the sublimity of the philosophers. Varro suggested, furthermore, that the people should rely more on the latter than on the former type of theology, since the philosophers write for their instruction while the poets write primarily for their amusement. Yet, the people leaned "more to the poets than to the philosophers" regarding the important matter of the genealogies of the gods.²⁵ Thus, Augustine found the distinction between political and fabulous theology itself to be fabulous:

It would have been more like a gentleman
and a scholar to have divided the gods into those which are
natural and those which were introduced by men, and to
say of these latter that the account given by the poets
differs from that of the priests, but that both accounts are

the things we find about us. But it also includes their source of origin—that from which they have grown, and from which their growth is constantly renewed—in other words, the reality underlying the things of our experience. We find this same double meaning in the word γενεσις, a synonym of φύσις, which is quite as old and perhaps even older" (*Ibid.*, 20). Voegelin's own understanding of the Greeks, in both *The New Science of Politics* and *Plato and Aristotle*, was significantly influenced by Jaeger's work.

²⁴ *City of God*, 132.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

so close in the fellowship of falsehood as to delight the demons whose only battle is with the teaching of truth.²⁶

The fabulous and political theologies are associated by Augustine in "the fellowship of falsehood" and contrasted with the natural theology of the philosophers. In Voegelin's account, Varro's three types of theology are thereby effectively reduced to two. However, Voegelin further claims that the original threefold distinction is re-established when Augustine adds the revelatory *theologia supernaturalis* of Christianity to the remaining categories of political and natural theology (*Ibid.*, 82).

In *The New Science of Politics*, Voegelin distinguishes between three types of truth that struggled for representative authority in the Roman Empire. Voegelin's distinction resembles Augustine's alleged modification of Varro's three types of theology. Voegelin defines his three types of truth in the following manner:

The first of these types is the truth represented by the early empires; it shall be designated as "cosmological truth." The second type of truth appears in the political culture of Athens and specifically in tragedy; it shall be called "anthropological truth"—with the understanding that the term covers the whole range of problems connected with the psyche as the sensorium of transcendence. The third type of truth that appears with Christianity shall be called "soteriological truth" (*Ibid.*, 76f.).

Voegelin's "cosmological" type of truth is similar to Augustine's "political" type of theology, I argue, due to the importance of mythic symbolizations of order in the early

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 131.

empires; the "anthropological" type of truth resembles Augustine's "*theologia naturalis*," since the classic philosophers were also concerned with the *psychē* as the sensorium of transcendence; and the "soteriological" type of truth corresponds to Augustine's "*theologia supernaturalis*." The essential correspondence might be obscured by Voegelin's terminology. Yet Voegelin's early understanding of the main difference between the Greek rational and Christian revelatory experiences of the divine can be seen by juxtaposing the respective tripartite divisions of theology and truth. The difference between the second and third types of theology and truth is of particular importance for understanding how Voegelin saw the Greek philosophers and the Christian theologians as distinct. The reason for Voegelin's early distinction of these types lies ultimately in his contention that the Greek anthropological "complex of experiences was enlarged by Christianity in a decisive point" (*Ibid.*, 77). Hence, we must search for the distinguishing experience.

I will postpone momentarily my analysis of "cosmo- logical truth" as it is less important to my immediate concern with demonstrating the essential agreement between Voegelin's types of truth and Augustine's alleged reclassification of Varro's types of theology. The main point of agreement can be seen clearly in Voegelin's distinction between Greek "anthropological" and Christian "soteriological" types of truth. Two important claims must be emphasized:

- (1) Voegelin claims that by "anthropological truth" should be understood "the whole range of problems connected with the psyche as the sensorium of transcendence"; and

(2) that "the Platonic-Aristotelian complex of experiences was enlarged by Christianity in a decisive point" (*NSP*, 77).

The former claim refers to the range of problems concerning the Greek soul's apperception of cosmos-transcending reality in particular. As such, it points implicitly to the differentiating analyses of the Hellenic philosophers from Xenophanes to Aristotle. The culminating and exceptional differentiations of the Platonic-Aristotelian analyses suggest to Voegelin that the *psychē* itself was "found as a new center in man at which he experiences himself as open toward transcendental reality." Yet Voegelin stresses that the *psychē* was not discovered "as if it were an object that had been present all the time and only escaped notice" (*Ibid.*, 67).²⁷ The Platonic-Aristotelian *psychē* was differentiated out of the less clearly analyzed or "compact" mythical accounts of psychological reality. The philosophers' awareness of the *psychē* had to be "developed and named" (*Ibid.*). Thus, Voegelin's claim that "anthropological truth" covers "the whole range of problems" concerning the soul's relation to transcendent reality necessitates the explicit inclusion of Aristotle, in particular, as a representative of

²⁷ In a later formulation, Voegelin explains that the *psychē* is a symbol with the help of which the classic philosophers were able to discuss their experiential awareness of the relations of order between the human and the divine: "The classical philosophers felt the need to develop a term to designate the place of experiences of being and gave this meaning to the term *psychē*. This fact may be explained on the analogy of the physiological placing of sensual perceptions: Just as the eye, ear, and hand are the organs of optic, acoustic, and haptic perceptions, man also needs an organ to perceive the tensions of being... In this sense the soul must be understood as sensorium of the tensions in being, in particular as sensorium of the transcendence" (*Anam.*, 125).

"anthropological" truth in contrast to the soteriological truth of the Christians.

The "anthropological" and "soteriological" types of truth, in contrast to "cosmological" truth, are said to have one feature in common, however. The philosophers' discovery of the *psychē* as the "sensorium of transcendence" constituted what Voegelin would refer to elsewhere as a "leap in being." This phrase refers to "the break with the compact experience of cosmic-divine order through the discovery of the transcendent-divine source of order" (*OH II*, 126). In other words, the mythical symbolization of intra-cosmic gods is replaced, through the experiential "leap," by philosophical and revelatory symbols which refer to divine reality beyond the cosmos. In Voegelin's account, this historical resymbolization separated the "cosmological" truth of the poets, which was expressed in the compact media of myth and poetry, from the more greatly differentiated "anthropological" truth of the tragedians and philosophers. Voegelin maintains that a parallel, though unrelated "leap" occurred in Israel. This allowed the Hebrews to separate themselves from the cosmological truth of the Egyptians. The Mosaic-revelatory break with Egyptian cosmology in particular is said to have occasioned the Hebraic move into uniquely historical existence under Yahweh (*cf.*, *OH I*, 402*ff.*). And the Christians are said to have inherited their symbolizations of historical existence under God exclusively from the Jews. The "leap" is important insofar as it indicates precisely how the "anthropological" and "soteriological" types of truth are similarly distinct from the "cosmological" type.

However, Voegelin claims that the parallel "leaps" in Hellas and Israel were

not of equal rank (*OH II*, 4). The break with the intra-cosmic gods of older, mythic symbols had different results in the two cultures: "In Israel it assumed the form of historical existence of a people under God; in Hellas it assumed the form of personal existence of individual human beings under God" (*Ibid.*, 169). If Voegelin's argument that linguistic symbols function primarily as expressions of experiences is maintained consistently, then the difference in symbolic results engendered by the parallel leaps should indicate a difference in the experiences themselves which engendered Judaeo-Christian revelatory and Greek philosophic truth. Indeed, we recall that Voegelin does claim that "the Platonic-Aristotelian complex of *experiences* was enlarged by Christianity in a decisive point" (*NSP*, 77; emphasis added). But, again, what is the decisive experience that distinguishes anthropological and soteriological types of truth? Voegelin's early understanding of the main difference between the Greek and Christian experiences is best illustrated by considering his account of Aristotle's *philia politike*, or political friendship.

In *The New Science of Politics*, Voegelin mentions Aristotle's claim that political friendship between unequals is difficult, if not impossible (*cf.*, *NE*, 1158b29-1159a13). This citation leads Voegelin to Aristotle's further claim that friendship between the gods and human beings is impossible because of their radical inequality (*NSP*, 77; *NE*, 1158b35). Voegelin then generalizes this latter claim beyond Aristotle himself: "The impossibility of *philia* between God and man may be considered typical

for the whole range of anthropological truth" (*NSP*, 77). In other words, the Greek philosophers, and Aristotle in particular, reached out toward "a God who rests in his immovable transcendence." Voegelin's understanding of the searching quest of the philosophers appears to suggest a unilateral movement toward the divine, initiated from the human side alone. In contrast to the experiential difference suggested by Christian symbols of mutuality in the divine-human encounter, Voegelin maintains that the Hellenic soul "reaches out toward divine reality, but it does not meet an answering movement from beyond" (*NSP*, 77f.).²⁸ Voegelin claims, in this work, that the Christian symbolization of the experience of God's gracious and prior movement toward the human soul is lacking in the Greek philosophical complex of experiences.

What do these observations reveal about Voegelin's early account of the nature of Greek rationality? In contrast to revelation, reason must be a completely human effort. When Voegelin mentions the human "participation" in transcendent reality—with reference, for example, to the Platonic vision of the *agathon* and the Aristotelian *nous*

²⁸ Although this is not the place to engage in criticism of Voegelin's interpretation of Aristotle, we may note simply that Voegelin is able to emphasize the Aristotelian claim that friendship between the gods and human beings is impossible only by ignoring other passages in the *Nicomachean Ethics* where Aristotle suggests otherwise: (a.) One who pursues intellectual activity (*noun energōn*) is beloved of the gods (*theophilestatos*) (*NE*, 1179a23-32); (b.) "[i]n all friendships which involve the superiority of one of the partners" the possibility of *rapprochement* is still held out if the superior partner receives more affection than he gives, thus creating "in some sense equality between them" (*NE*, 1158b20-30); and (c.) the possibility of *philia* between the gods and human beings who attempt to be most like them is not limited exclusively to the realm of a *political* love. Even though the gods are worshipped in the *polis*, the political realm is certainly not the only sphere in which they are known and desired for their own sakes.

(*cf.*, *NSP*, 6)—he must understand the nature of the participation to be unilateral. This suspicion is confirmed in *Israel and Revelation* (1956). Here Voegelin claims that "[w]hen man is in search of God, as in Hellas, the wisdom gained remains generically human; when God is in search of man, as in Israel, the responsive recipient of revelation becomes historically unique." And the most "responsive recipient" in Israel is ultimately the Christ (*OH I*, 496). Perhaps the clearest articulation of Voegelin's early understanding of the "contrapuntal formulations" of philosophy and revelation is found in *The World of the Polis* (1957):

The word [of Israel's revelatory prophecy], the *dabar*, immediately and fully reveals the spiritual order of existence, as well as its origin in transcendent-divine being, but leaves it to the prophet to discover the immutability and recalcitrance of the world-immanent structure of being; the philosopher's love of wisdom slowly dissolves the compactness of cosmic order until it has become the order of world-immanent being beyond which is sensed, though never revealed, the unseen transcendent measure (*OH II*, 52).

Again, Voegelin suggests that the difference between the traditions of Israel and Hellas is more than merely symbolic: "the two experiences differ so profoundly in content that they become articulate in the two different symbolisms of Revelation and Philosophy" (*Ibid.*, 1).

Nevertheless, even in the fifties the opening of the philosopher's soul is said to constitute "a new truth" regarding the soul's relation to the divine (*NSP*, 67). But who or what "opens" the philosopher's soul? Voegelin does not ask this question

directly. But it is clear that his answer would have necessarily contained a significant measure of ambiguity. The opening of the philosopher's *psychē* is said to be "as much action as it is passion," and "a discovery which produces its experiential material along with its explication; the openness of the soul is experienced through the opening of the soul itself." It is an experiential discovery for which we are indebted "to the genius of the mystic philosophers." But if the philosopher's "leap in being" discovers no more than "the divinity in its radically nonhuman transcendence," does it not follow that the soul must be said to open itself? This seems to be the case in Voegelin's understanding of the Greeks in this period (*Ibid.*, 67). An important clue to this effect is Voegelin's contention that the opening of the philosopher's soul is "as much action," *i.e.* is due equally to a uniquely human effort, as it is an unanticipated experience. He makes no similar claim about the human role in the Christian experience of revelation. And, unlike Augustine, Voegelin does not explain the pagan philosophers' knowledge of God in the Pauline terms of a divine self-revelation in creation.²⁹

In contrast to the unilateral, human search for divine reality symbolized in the Greek anthropological type of truth, Voegelin argues that

[t]he experience of mutuality in the relation with God, of the *amicitia* in the Thomistic sense, of the grace which imposes a supernatural form on the nature of man, is the specific difference of Christian truth. The revelation of this grace in history, through the incarnation of the Logos in Christ, intelligibly fulfilled the adventitious movement of the spirit in the mystic philosophers (*NSP*, 78).

²⁹ Cf., *City of God*, 154, 158, 161.

Divine revelatory grace appears to be the decisive experience that the Greek philosophers lacked. "To be sure," Voegelin acknowledges, "in reading Plato one has the feeling of moving continuously on the verge of a breakthrough," *i.e.* into the revelatory dimension of a graciously mutual participation between God and human beings. Nevertheless, Plato remains only "on the verge" of such a breakthrough. Even when Plato is said to have scaled the dimension of the soul's height in the *Symposium*, he gets no further, according to Voegelin, than "the *border* of transcendence" (*NSP*, 66; emphasis added). Voegelin realizes that Plato and Aristotle, in the tradition of Solon and Heraclitus, were well aware of experiences like "the unseen measure of right judgement" containing "the right boundaries of all things" (Solon frag. 16: *NSP*, 68). But the philosophers' critical truth, the "unseen measure," was confirmed and fulfilled, in Voegelin's early understanding, only with "the revelation of the measure itself," *viz.* with the appearance of the Christ (*Ibid.*, 78).

Summary

The results of my findings can now be stated briefly. I began by noting Voegelin's dissatisfaction with positivistic restrictions concerning the legitimate scope of scientific inquiry. The so-called fact/value distinction, in particular, attempted to remove the discussion of personal and political "values" from the sphere of rational debate. Consequently, there could be no scientific distinction between true and false opinions of right psychological and political order if all "values" were equally understood as beyond rational assessment. But "value-judgments" did not cease to have an important role in organizing political reality. The structure of political reality did not change; and "values" could not be replaced by "positive science." Actual human beings continued to experience preferences when faced with the consequences of choosing one form of political action over another, even if they did not believe it was possible to give a well-reasoned or scientific account of why one choice was indeed better than another.

In Max Weber's attempt to create a "value-free" political science, Voegelin found that the implicit irrationality of the positivist reduction of science came to its explicitly self-defeating end. Voegelin found in Weber's conspicuous neglect of pre-Reformation Christianity and Greek philosophy an indication as to the theoretical accounts of political reality from which the twentieth century recovery of political science could take its departure (*NSP*, 6). Voegelin explored these gaps in Weber's studies on the sociology of religion and found rationally developed sciences of right psychological and political order. He found, in particular, Aristotle's recognition that the nature of that

which is studied determines the proper way in which it can be known scientifically. In other words, the quantifying science of external phenomena is of little ultimate relevance to the qualifying science of right psychological and political order. Voegelin pointed to Aristotle's accounts of the "mature man" (*spoudaios*) and the *bios theoretikos* in acknowledgement of a complex of symbols and theoretical concepts that could assess "values" rationally.

But Voegelin found, in *The New Science of Politics*, that "the adventitious movement of the spirit" in Greek philosophy was still in need of "the ultimate clarity concerning the *conditio humana* that was brought by Christianity" (*Ibid.*, 78, 79). The philosophical complex of experiences was decisively enlarged, Voegelin claimed, by the Christian experience of mutuality in the human relationship with God. I suggested, by implication, that Voegelin must have understood Platonic-Aristotelian rationality as a unilateral reaching out toward divine reality that was "sensed, though never revealed." Plato was said to have arrived only at "the border of transcendence" in his explorations of the *psychē*. It was the Judaeo-Christian experience and symbolization of grace that signalled the character of mutuality in the participation of divine-in-human and human-in-divine reality. And with this additional experience the rationality of the philosophers was brought "to the ultimate border of clarity which by tradition is called revelation" (*Ibid.*, 79).³⁰

³⁰ For a more substantial account of the understanding of Christianity that is presupposed in *The New Science of Politics*, see the correspondence between Alfred Schutz and Voegelin in *The Philosophy of Order*, eds., Peter J. Opitz & Gregor Sebba,

CHAPTER TWO:
Plato and Aristotle (1957)

We now move beyond the introductory discussion in *The New Science of Politics* to consider the more detailed account of Aristotelian rationality that Voegelin formulated in *Plato and Aristotle*, the third volume of *Order and History*. I will begin by considering Voegelin's account of the Aristotelian *bios theoretikos*. This is his clearest discussion from the nineteen fifties concerning the nature of reason. I then broaden the scope of my analysis by reconsidering the two modes of participation that emerged in the previous section of my study.

First, I consider Voegelin's account of the relationship between Aristotelian and Platonic philosophizing. Voegelin's understanding of the similarities and differences between the two philosophers is considered. Their respective ontologies are of particular importance: Voegelin observes that only when ontology as a science is lost can philosophical knowledge become suspect as a field of subjective, uncritical opinion (*cf.*, *NSP*, 12). Voegelin is still clearly attempting to regain a compelling science of essence. Once his understanding of the Platonic and Aristotelian ontologies has been clarified, we will be in a better position to understand his early claim that Aristotelian *noesis* constitutes an "immanentization" of the Platonic symbols of transcendent being. Second,

(Stuttgart: Ernst Klett, 1981), pp. 434-465.

I will discuss Voegelin's understanding of the relation between the Greek rational and Christian revelatory accounts of the nature of participation to determine if there are any differences from his understanding in *The New Science of Politics*.

Voegelin and Aristotle

In *The New Science of Politics*, Voegelin mentioned the *bios theoretikos* as Aristotle's term for the fullest actualization of potential humanity. Only the *spoudaios*, or "mature man," whose character has been formed by the "habitual actualization of the dianoetic and ethical virtues" is capable of engaging in the *bios theoretikos* (*NSP*, 64). Despite its significance, the concept was left virtually unexamined. It was noted simply that the *bios theoretikos* refers to the attempt of *spoudaioi* to formulate "the meaning of existence by explicating the content of a definite class of experiences" (*Ibid.*). Since, in his later work, Voegelin understands the *bios theoretikos* as the "life of reason," we will need to pay particularly close attention to his early discussion of the nature of reason in this type of life.

In *Plato and Aristotle*, the *bios theoretikos* is translated as the "life of contemplation." What is the nature of this contemplation? And how is it related to reason and theory? Voegelin says that the full meaning of the *bios theoretikos* is difficult to reconstruct from Aristotle's later, esoteric works alone: "The comparatively terse, late formulations presuppose a development that must have manifested itself more clearly in the early work of which only fragments are extant" (*OH III*, 307). Nonetheless, we can recover something of the particular character of the *bios theoretikos*, Voegelin suggests, by studying Aristotle's analysis of the human *psychē* and its corresponding excellences (*aretai*), and by drawing upon classical texts which allow for the partial reconstruction

of "the literary ambiance of the early Aristotle" (*Ibid.*, 308).

Voegelin recognizes a tripartite division of the *psychē* in his analysis of Aristotle's *Nicomachean Ethics*. The human soul has both a rational and an irrational part, "and according to preferences of classification," Voegelin maintains, "one can subdivide either the one or the other into two further parts" (*Ibid.*, 296). Voegelin's own preference of classification is indicated by his subdivision of the irrational part of the soul into two further parts:

We thus arrive at a tripartite division of the soul into its vegetative and sentient faculties which man has in common with animals; into passions and desires which are not rational but through persuasion, in an educative process, can be made to obey reason; and into the rational faculties proper (*Ibid.*, 296f.).³¹

Although Voegelin does not give any specific textual reference to support his tripartite division of the Aristotelian *psychē*, it is certainly a common interpretation. It seems to be based upon some introductory remarks from Book I of the *Ethics*. Aristotle claims that,

the irrational part, as well as the soul as a whole, is double. One division of it, the vegetative, does not share in rational principle at all; the other, the seat of the appetites and of desire in general, does in a sense participate in principle, as being amenable and obedient to it...If on the other hand it be more correct to speak of the appetitive part of the soul also as rational, in that case it is the rational part which, as

³¹ Voegelin's reading of a tripartite Aristotelian *psychē* resembles his analysis of a similarly divided Platonic soul (*cf.*, *OH III*, 108ff.). The implication is that Plato and Aristotle stand closely together in their psychologies.

well as the whole soul, is divided into two (*Eth. Nic.*, 1103^{aff.}).

Voegelin's understanding of the *bios theoretikos* has some relation to this tripartite division of the soul. He observes that, for Aristotle, "the definition of the *bios theoretikos* is closely connected with the definition of eudaimonia" (*OH III*, 305). He translates the Greek term *eudaimonia* as "happiness." It is recognized further, following Aristotle, that while we may indeed assume a general human desire for happiness, there is little agreement on the question as to how human beings are to find happiness in truth (*OH III*, 296; *NE*, 1095a15^{ff.}). Voegelin explains that "three types of life could lead to happiness: the apolaustic life (that is, the life of hedonistic indulgence), the political life, and the theoretic life" (*OH III*, 304; *NE*, 1095b14^{ff.}). There is no excellence or virtue that can be associated truthfully with the apolaustic life. The actualization of the ethical virtues—*i.e.* "the habits of choosing the mean (*mesotes*) between excess and falling short"—is the primary form of excellence associated with the political life (*OH III*, 297). Finally, the dianoetic virtues symbolize the primary form of excellence associated with the theoretic life. Voegelin acknowledges five dianoetic virtues: "scientific knowledge (*episteme*), art or skill (*techne*), prudence (*phronesis*), wisdom (*sophia*), and intellection (*nous*)" (*Ibid.*)(*cf.*, *NE*, 1139b15^{f.}). Following Aristotle, he describes only four of the dianoetic virtues in any detail:

These are the excellences which enable us to attain truth in its varieties of first principles (intellection), universals and demonstrated truth (scientific knowledge), the mastery of a

subject which results from a combination of the knowledge of first principles with scientific knowledge (wisdom), and the right means for attaining the good of man (prudence) (*OH III*, 297).

The three types of life said to produce happiness are arranged hierarchically from the basest to the noblest in accordance with their respective capacities to enable the cultivation of *eudaimonia*, as it is known through reason: "The dianoetic virtues stand higher in rank than the ethical virtues; and through the practice of the dianoetic excellences man rises to the true *eudaimonia* of the *bios theoretikos*" (*Ibid.*). Voegelin recognizes that Aristotle supports his decision for true happiness in the life of contemplation "by [his] analysis of the faculties in the human soul" (*Ibid.*, 296). In other words, the three types of life roughly correspond to the three strata of Aristotle's psychology. Accordingly, we may discover the degree to which each type of life may be considered truly reasonable by juxtaposing the three types of life with the three strata of the *psychē*: (1) The life of hedonistic indulgence corresponds for the most part to the vegetative stratum of the soul, which human beings have in common with plants and animals; it is devoid of reason. (2) The political life corresponds approximately to the appetitive stratum of the soul, the ethical virtues of which concern the right ordering of one's passions and desires. This stratum of the soul does not have reason in itself, but in the actualization of the ethical virtues—*e.g.*, of justice, temperance, courage, liberality, magnificence, and good temper—it demonstrates its ability to recognize and accept the leadership of reason. (3) Finally, the theoretic life corresponds to the rational

stratum of the soul proper. Hence the philosopher's life of contemplation, the *bios theoretikos*, symbolizes the fullest (*teleios*) actualization of the rational part of the soul.

The *bios theoretikos* is said to yield the "highest happiness (*teleia eudaimonia*)" since "the fullest eudaimonia will be a form of contemplative activity (*theoretike energeia*)(1178b7f)" (*OH III*, 305). Generally, Voegelin recognizes that the rational element is the highest part of the soul and that the philosopher's life of contemplation symbolizes the fullest actualization of the soul's capacity for reason. Yet we can be more specific regarding his understanding of the highest excellence associated with the rational part of the soul.

Voegelin's discussion of the Aristotelian *nous* follows closely the account developed in the *Nicomachean Ethics*. Voegelin is aware that Aristotle generally uses the term *nous* with "an amplitude of meaning from intellection to faith" (*OH II*, 208). However, in his examination of the meanings of *nous*, and particularly of its relation to the *bios theoretikos*, Voegelin is more concerned with the soul's capacity for the intellection of first principles of science. He observes that for Aristotle the "activity (*energeia*) of the intellect is identified as the theoretic activity (*theoretike energeia*)" (*OH III*, 305; *NE*, 1177a17ff.). Voegelin equates the noetic and the theoretic activities of the soul.³² The reason for Voegelin's identification of these activities is clear. The *nous*

³² In the passage cited, Aristotle is not as conclusive as Voegelin suggests. The passage deserves to be quoted in full as it also reveals an ambiguity in Aristotle's own account of the nature of *nous*: "But if happiness consists in activity [*energeia*] in accordance with virtue, it is reasonable that it should be activity in accordance with the

is often referred to by Plato and Aristotle as the soul's capacity for "vision." And, as Voegelin relates, "the *theorein* [speculation] of Aristotle is still close in its meaning to the noun *theoros* [spectator] from which it derives" (*Ibid.*, 308).

The cultivation of *nous*, "or whatever else it be that is thought to rule and lead us by nature [*kata physin*], and to have cognizance of what is noble and divine," is what Aristotle finds to yield the highest happiness. Voegelin formulates succinctly the relation between true eudaimonia and the cultivation of *nous*:

The happiness of theoretic activity is highest because contemplation is the highest function in man; and it is the highest function because it is the function of the highest part in the soul of man, that is, of the intellect (*nous*)...The meaning of 'highest' or 'perfect' is further elucidated by the designation of *nous* as the divinest part (*to theiotaton*) in man; the activity of the divinest part, thus, becomes the divinest activity; and the pleasure accompanying it becomes the divinest pleasure, the true eudaimonia (*Ibid.*, 305).

The divinest activity of the soul is a kind of "seeing." But what does the *nous* "see"? To answer this question we need to address what Voegelin refers to as the "religious ramifications" associated with the *bios theoretikos*.

Voegelin finds that the "religiousness" of Aristotle's theoretic life was prefigured by the Xenophantic "glance at the expanse of the Heaven" by which he

highest virtue; and this will be the virtue of the best part of us. Whether then this be the intellect [*nous*], or whatever else it be that is thought to rule and lead us by nature [*kata physin*], and to have cognizance of what is noble and divine, either as being itself also actually divine, or as being relatively the divinest part [*to theiotaton*] of us, it is the activity of this part of us in accordance with the virtue proper to it that will constitute perfect happiness [*teleia eudaimonia*]" (*Eth. Nic.*, 1177a13-19).

recognized, according to Aristotle, that "The One is the God" (*OH II*, 181)(*Meta.*, 986b18ff.). Voegelin adds that Xenophanes' observation "was neither a speculation on *physis* [nature], nor the experience of universal transcendence, but an experience *sui generis*" (*OH II*, 183). His philosophical genius is found in his "peculiar spiritual directness." The most important part of the account, for Voegelin, is Xenophanes' formulation of the assurance. Voegelin remarks: "God is perhaps not one, but the One is the God. The experience is concerned with the One, and of this One divinity is predicated" (*Ibid.*, 181).

By mentioning the Xenophantic prefiguration of the Aristotelian *bios theoretikos*, Voegelin calls attention to Aristotle's so-called "stellar religion" whereby the classic philosopher realized that "there exist other things far more divine in their nature than man, for instance, to mention the most visible, the things of which the celestial system [*kosmos*] is composed" (*Eth. Nic.*, 1141b1ff.).³³ Voegelin says that the remaining religious implications associated specifically with Aristotelian contemplation can be discussed only briefly because they are not sufficiently clarified in the *Ethics* by Aristotle himself. Voegelin summarizes:

Obviously, the Aristotelian nous is more than the intellect that becomes active in the sciences of world-immanent objects. The nous as the *theiotion* is the region in the soul where man transcends his mere humanity into the divine

³³ Aristotle's *Metaphysics* 1074a30 suggests that he has in mind the visible, stellar bodies. See *OH III*, 289f., 307ff. for Voegelin's brief mention of Aristotle's "stellar religion."

ground. In the activity of the nous man is concerned about first principles and things divine, and in such activity his soul partakes of the things divine and is engaged in a process of immortalization (*OH III*, 306).

It seems that Voegelin's recognition that the philosopher's soul "partakes of things divine" and engages in "a process of immortalization" represents a change from his earlier claim that the Greeks symbolized only "anthropological truth." The symbolization, and presumably the experience, of "immortalization" seems best categorized as a type of "soteriological truth." These points will be addressed in my analysis of Voegelin's discussion of the nature of the Greek and Christian experiences of participation. For now, it is important to note Voegelin's explicit reference to the philosophical participation in divine reality as a noetic form of immortalization.

The contemplative life is the highest end and greatest of goods that Aristotle can entreat his contemporary listeners and later readers to pursue. "In the *bios theoretikos*," Voegelin suggests, "we have the intellectualized counterpart to the Platonic vision of the Agathon which, in beholding the Idea, transforms the soul and lets it partake of the order of the Idea" (*Ibid.*, 306). The Aristotelian intellect "sees" something like Plato's idea of the good itself, according to Voegelin. But is Voegelin suggesting further that Aristotle's *bios theoretikos*, as the *intellectualized* counterpart to the Platonic vision, has changed the Platonic account of the soul's vision? He is indeed. To appreciate fully the nature of the alleged change, we will need to consider specifically how Voegelin thinks that Aristotelian *noesis* changes the Platonic symbolization of transcendent reality.

Voegelin, Aristotle and Plato

The standard claim that a "great break" separates the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle is essentially groundless or "imaginary," Voegelin argues (*OH III*, 273). He makes this claim in a section entitled "*The Evolution of Aristotelian Thought*." But in what way does Voegelin think that Aristotle's thought evolved without creating a break with Plato?

On the conventional or "doxographic" level, Plato is considered a transcendental idealist while Aristotle is understood as an empirical realist. Voegelin finds this characterization to be erroneous. He suggests that the actual differences in the philosophical accounts of Plato and Aristotle are due primarily to an Aristotelian "shift of attention." This "shift" was accompanied by a "far-reaching differentiation of problems" whose scope extended the philosophical horizon of Plato to a more detailed account of immanent being (*Ibid.*, 274). Yet both Plato and Aristotle were philosophers. They distinguished between wisdom and knowledge, loving the former and appreciating the latter. Aristotle was no empiricist in the modern, exclusively sensory-perceptive sense. "Philosophy as a mode of life in the Platonic-Socratic sense had formed the soul of Aristotle," Voegelin argues, "and the imprint was indelible" (*Ibid.*, 273). Voegelin intends to show that Aristotle and Plato were in agreement on the nature of philosophy as a way of life that seeks a truthful ordering of the soul through the loving quest of the *sophon*, which is divine. But upon what does Voegelin base his claims? He emphasizes,

following the argument in Werner Jaeger's *Aristotle* (Oxford:1948), that "our picture of Aristotelian philosophy, since the early [exoteric] work is almost completely lost, was mainly determined by the esoteric schoolwork of the later years" (*Ibid.*). But what is it about the early work of Aristotle that leads Voegelin to counter the common separation of the two philosophers?

Only fragments are preserved of Aristotle's early work. The extant fragments reveal that he wrote in dialogical as well as prosaic form. The titles of the early dialogues indicate to Voegelin that

the young philosopher was conscientiously working through the Socratic problems. The *Eudemus* or *On the Soul* corresponds to the Platonic *Phaedo*, the *Gryllus* or *On Rhetoric* to the *Gorgias*, the *On Justice* to the *Republic*, and the *Sophist*, *Statesman*, *Symposium*, and *Menexenus* to the Platonic dialogues of the same title.

Voegelin finds that the extant fragments are of sufficient length "to make it certain that the early works were not only formally related to the Socratic dialogues of Plato, but that Aristotle had absorbed and made his own the Platonic conception of philosophy as a movement of the soul" (*Ibid.*, 272).

In Voegelin's understanding, the Platonic soul was ordered primarily by the philosopher's experiential awareness of the forces of Thanatos (Death), Eros (Desire), and Dike (Justice). Corresponding to these three ordering forces, then, "philosophy was the practice of dying, the erotic reaching out of the soul toward the Agathon, and the right ordering of the soul through participation in the Idea. The same conception of philosophy

as a mode of life...pervaded Aristotle's early, exoteric work" (*Ibid.*). Voegelin claims generally of Aristotle's early work that "the philosopher's experience of transcendence" determined the choice of problems to be treated in his various written arguments (*Ibid.*, 279). Thus, we have only a fragmentary account of how Aristotle symbolized his "experience of transcendence," while our knowledge of his exploration of immanent being is far more complete. That many interpreters are inattentive to the early fragments is an important reason why the "doxographic" separation of Plato and Aristotle has arisen, Voegelin claims. Voegelin cites a fragment from Aristotle's early work *On Prayer* in support of his claim that Aristotle knew of the same engendering experiences of transcendence as Plato. The fragment refers to the experiences of those who are being initiated into the mystery-religions. It is translated by Voegelin in the following manner: "Those who are being initiated are not required to grasp anything with the understanding [*mathein*], but to have a certain inner experience [or passion, *pathein*], and so to be put into a particular frame of mind, presuming that they are capable of the frame of mind in the first place" (*Ibid.*, 275; bracketing by Voegelin). This is the only text from Aristotle's early work that Voegelin analyzes.

Without due consideration of the larger context from which this fragment has been taken it is difficult for us to ascertain whether or not Voegelin is correct to cite the passage as something true of Aristotle's experience. Indeed, Aristotle appears to be referring to others, *viz.* to "those who are being initiated," and not necessarily to himself. Consequently, the fragment might well be read as Aristotle's criticism of the lack of true

understanding in adherents of the mystery religions. Nevertheless, Voegelin claims that this passage represents one of Aristotle's "finest formulations of the problem of faith"; and the following interpretive remarks are offered immediately after his citation of the passage: "The *cognitio Dei* through faith is not a cognitive act in which an object is given, but a cognitive, spiritual passion of the soul. In the passion of faith the ground of being is experienced, and that means the ground of all being, including immanent form" (*Ibid.*, 275).

What accounts for Voegelin's inclusion of "faith" in his description of the soul's *pathein*? Does he wish to imply here that Aristotle knew of the *cognitio fidei*? Voegelin does not go this far. The cognition of faith, in the Christian-revelatory sense, is denied to the Greeks (*cf.*, *OH II*, 218*f.*, 203*f.*). He does recognize, however, that Platonic myth presupposes a sensitivity similar to the Christian level of the *cognitio fidei*. Plato's ability to distinguish between myth and knowledge is said to correspond to "the Christian distinction between the spheres of faith and reason" (*OH III*, 187*f.*, 193*f.*). And Aristotle's early works best reveal his similarity to Plato.

Voegelin is explicitly attempting to counter the philosophical convention that equates the "real" Aristotle with the late Aristotle. The "real" Aristotle, according to the standard view, concentrated his analyses upon the presence of immanent form, and managed finally to disentangle himself from his earlier dependence on Platonic myth and transcendentalism (*Ibid.*, 281). Conversely, Voegelin finds in Aristotle's later work an *additional*, but not an *exceptional* focus upon form in immanent being: "The [later]

intensification of concern about immanent form is an *addition* to the Aristotelian range; it does not *supersede* the earlier philosophical motivation" (*Ibid.*, 280). In support of this claim, Voegelin recalls a sentence from a letter written in the last years of Aristotle's life: "The more I am by myself and alone, the more I have come to love myths" (*Ibid.*, 292). This sentence is said to refer to an earlier remark from the *Metaphysics*: "the lover of myth is in a sense a lover of wisdom (982b18-20)" (*OH III*, 292). Hence, it is due partly to his consideration of Aristotle's earlier work, that Voegelin considers Aristotle and Plato to stand together on the experiential reality of transcendence as it is given in the *pathein* of the soul.

Voegelin clearly intends that Aristotle's later, esoteric schoolwork should be read in light of his earlier, foundational investigations. Yet the failure to recognize an essential continuity between Aristotle's early and late philosophizing is only one source of what Voegelin understands as the doxographic separation of Plato and Aristotle. Voegelin describes other sources of the misunderstanding. In particular, he says that the attempt to separate radically the thought of the two philosophers usually seeks support from Aristotle's critical evaluation of the Platonic symbolization of the transcendent forms (*eide*).

Although Voegelin argues, in *Order and History III*, for a greater degree of continuity between the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle than many have accepted, he is not inattentive to Aristotle's criticisms of Plato and the Platonists. In fact, Voegelin

is in partial agreement with Aristotle's critique.³⁴ For Plato, according to Voegelin, the Idea was "a paradigmatic form in separate, transcendent existence" (*Ibid.*, 274). Voegelin claims that Plato had discovered the reality of transcendent form "as a separate substance when his experiential attention had been turned in a direction opposite to the Aristotelian." Aristotle is said to have criticized Plato on the following counts: (1) Plato allegedly "duplicated" immanent form to arrive at his symbolization of transcendent form; and (2) he hypostatized transcendent form as a "separate" entity (*Ibid.*, 275f.). Voegelin rejects the first part of Aristotle's criticism, but he accepts the second.

Voegelin's rejection of the first part of Aristotle's critique is based upon the former's perceived ability to clarify a problem that he finds rooted in the structure of philosophical language itself. To understand the core of the problem we must recall our discussion of what Voegelin calls the "leap in being." The philosophers' leap in being "differentiates world-transcendent Being as the source of all being, and correspondingly attaches to the 'world' the character of immanence" (*Ibid.*, 277). However, misinterpretations of philosophical language arise, Voegelin argues, if one does not realize that experiences of transcendent reality can be articulated only by means of words that originally represent things in the world of sense experience. Hence, the accounts of transcendent reality, "both concepts and propositions, which refer to the *terminus ad*

³⁴ For the substance of Aristotle's criticisms see the *Nicomachean Ethics*, (1096a10-1097a14); the *Eudemian Ethics*, (1217b2-16); and the *Metaphysics*, (990a33ff.). It is noteworthy that Aristotle does not speak directly of Plato in the majority of these passages. His criticisms may therefore be directed against Platonists.

quem of an experience of transcendence must be understood analogically, whether they be symbols of the myth, of revelation, or of philosophy" (*Ibid.*). Yet Voegelin claims that neither Plato nor Aristotle were completely clear on the analogical character of symbols with transcendent referents; and "an approximately satisfactory formula was only found in the Thomistic *analogia entis*" (*Ibid.*, 276).³⁵

Voegelin rejects Aristotle's "duplication" charge in part because it suggests to him that the experiential context of the Platonic symbols is being ignored in order for them to be treated as if they were concepts referring to a datum of sense experience (*Ibid.*, 277). Aristotle's attack on the separate existence of the Platonic forms is said to have arisen from a problem which Plato left unresolved in his *Parmenides*. The unresolved problem concerns the proper interpretation of Parmenides' three "ways of inquiry." The "ways" are formulated on the occasion of Parmenides' experience and symbolization of transcendent Being.³⁶ Voegelin cautions that if these formulations are not understood as true "only in the context of an inquiry into the 'Is!'", if they are generalized into logical theories applicable to propositions concerning immanent objects,

³⁵ This is an odd claim for Voegelin to make when one considers that in his own analysis of Plato's *Republic*, and particularly of the philosopher's vision of the good, the analogical character of the propositions concerning the sun is recognized (*cf.*, *OH III*, 113). Indeed, at one point Voegelin even mentions a Platonic *analogia entis* (*Ibid.*, 154).

³⁶ Voegelin summarizes the three "ways of inquiry" into Being thus: "(1) That only Being exists; (2) that only Non-Being exists; (3) that both Being and Non-Being exist." Parmenides is said to have decided "that the first proposition was the Truth, the second proposition was unthinkable, and the third proposition was the opinion of men who were fascinated by the manifold of the changing world" (*OH II*, 295).

fantastic consequences will ensue." Voegelin finds that a similar generalization lies at the root of Aristotle's criticism of the Platonic forms in separate existence (*OH II*, 211).

The categorical misuse of symbols with transcendent referents as if they referred to world-immanent things is what Voegelin calls "immanentization." Voegelin contends that the fallacious immanentization of transcendent symbols is a widespread problem that both preceded Plato in sophistic thought and followed him in the thought of the Stoics. Voegelin declares that this type of symbolic transformation is indeed so prominent "that the history of philosophy is in the largest part the history of its derailment" (*OH III*, 277). Plato is said to have attempted to reverse the sophistic transformation of philosophical symbols by his mythopoetic symbolizations that take into account the fullness of the philosopher's experience of the order of being. But Voegelin finds that the restorative high point of Plato's philosophizing was short lived. Once transcendent reality is misunderstood as a mere duplication of things in sense experience, the next step is often to do away with transcendent reality altogether as unnecessary and unverifiable. It should be obvious from the preceding discussion that Voegelin does not charge Aristotle with taking this latter step. But Aristotle's charge that Plato's transcendent forms are a duplication of immanent form does suggest to Voegelin that the process of immanentization has already begun in Aristotle's work.

The following example will help us to understand the specific character of Aristotle's abuse of Platonic symbols that compels Voegelin to reject the duplication charge. In the *Laws*, Plato's Athenian constructs, in speech, a paradigmatic city of the

Magnesians. He limits the number of hearths in the city to 5,040. The number is of great symbolic significance; it cannot be changed without causing great disorder (*Laws*, 738b, 740b, 929a). Voegelin argues that Plato chose the number 5,040 "because of its cosmological relations." The figure cannot be changed to 5,039 or 5,041 "without destroying the musical and zodaical implications of the numerical symbolism" (*OH III*, 293). Yet Aristotle does precisely this in his *Politics*. With specific reference to the *Laws*, Aristotle overlooks the symbolic significance of 5,040 and suggests that even 5,000 citizens is too large of a group to constitute a well-ordered city; for such a multitude "will need the territory of Babylon or some other that is unlimited in extent to sustain in idleness five thousand [citizens bearing arms] and a crowd of women and attendants about them many times as large" (*Politics*, 1265a14ff.). In this curious transformation of an important Platonic symbol of cosmic order, Voegelin argues that Aristotle "destroys the Platonic play with cosmic numbers; he divests the figure of its symbolic meaning and treats it as a statistical population figure" (*OH III*, 293). In other words, the Platonic symbol is intended to link the order of the polis in speech with the transcendent order of the cosmos, but Aristotle's treatment of the Platonic symbol as a population figure for an actual polis amounts to an immanentization of the Platonic symbol which severs its original link with the transcendent order of the cosmos.

Voegelin does not intend to suggest that Aristotle's abuse of philosophical symbols is of the same order as that which he finds in the Sophists and the Stoics. Aristotle's tendency to immanentize symbols of the soul's participation in transcendent

reality is said to have remained primarily an implicit problem. The derailment, "though present in Aristotle, was still restrained by his genius." Accordingly, it did not come fully into view "either in its nature or its consequences" (*Ibid.*, 277). But the following difficulty remains: why would one of Plato's greatest students have misunderstood his teacher on the fundamental importance of the nature of philosophical symbols? Voegelin offers two suggestions in response to this question.

First, the source of Aristotle's transformation of Platonic symbols, Voegelin claims, is not to be found in a failing of the Aristotelian intellect, but in his "passionate will to focus attention so thoroughly on a particular problem that the wider range of the order of being is lost from sight" (*Ibid.*, 278). Aristotle's "particular problem" concerned the presence of form in immanent being. Voegelin's second suggestion is based upon Aristotle's curious abuse of Plato's symbolic limitation of Magnesian hearths to 5,040. Voegelin finds this transformation to be particularly troublesome since "Aristotle was a member of the Academy during the decades in which Plato worked on the *Laws*; and he must have been thoroughly acquainted with its symbolic problems" (*Ibid.*, 293). Although it is recognized that no certain answer is possible to the question concerning Aristotle's apparent misunderstanding of Plato, Voegelin suggests that

we should be aware that criticisms of this type occur so frequently in the *Politics* that we must assume in Aristotle's veneration of Plato an admixture of subdued animosity, venting itself in misunderstandings that cannot be quite unintentional" (*Ibid.*, 293f.).

But Voegelin does not, and perhaps cannot, suggest any motives for the alleged

intentionality of Aristotle's misrepresentation.

We have seen that Voegelin rejects Aristotle's claim that Plato simply "duplicated" immanent being with his symbolization of transcendent form. Against Aristotle's charge, Voegelin maintains that "[t]he Platonic realm of changeless, eternal being was not a wanton assumption; it was experienced as a reality in the erotic fascination of the soul by the Agathon [the Good] as well as in its cathartic effects." In other words, the Platonic realm of ideas was one of the philosopher's symbols by the help of which he articulated his experiences of transcendence. Being is experienced in both immanent and transcendent form, but "we have no other means than the analogical use of terms derived from our experiences of immanent being" to symbolize transcendent being (*Ibid.*, 275). Thus, if a philosopher accounts for the entire range of the order of being, Voegelin contends, "[i]n one form or another, he must do what Aristotle accuses Plato of doing, that is, he must 'duplicate' being." The philosopher has no other choice but to use symbols analogically: "Hence, the Aristotelian criticism of the Idea is pointless as far as the question of duplication is concerned" (*Ibid.*, 276). However, we recall that Voegelin accepts the second part of Aristotle's critique.

Voegelin agrees with Aristotle's criticism of the essentially separate nature of the Platonic forms:

Plato, indeed, hypostatized transcendental being into a datum as if it were given in world-immanent experience; and he treated absolute being as a genus of which the varieties of immanent being are species. Aristotle rightly criticized this part of Platonic speculation; and in

eliminating this confusion he penetrated to the clearness of his own ontology (*Ibid.*, 276).

Thus, in Voegelin's understanding, Aristotle saw clearly through a type of confusion that led Plato to hypostatize the forms in separate existence. Yet for the ostensible clarity that Aristotle gained by attacking the separate essence of the Platonic forms, Voegelin comments further that "he paid the great price of eliminating the problem of transcendental form along with its speculative misuse" (*Ibid.*). Plato was wrong to hypostatize the forms as "separate substances"; and Aristotle was wrong to eliminate the problem of transcendental form in his critique of Plato. The following question arises: if Voegelin understood the "duplication" charge to be fallacious, why does he not say the same of the apparently similar problem of hypostatization? In other words, is it possible for Voegelin to disagree with the first part of Aristotle's critique and accept the second?

We recall that the attempt to preserve an essential line of continuity between the exoteric and esoteric works of Aristotle is the basis upon which Voegelin states that the later work adds to, but does not supersede, the philosophical range of the earlier. It is also the basis upon which he attempts to avoid the conventional understanding of a great break between Plato and Aristotle. But if my analysis of Voegelin's understanding of the Aristotelian critique is sound, then Voegelin's acceptance of Aristotle's reification criticism actually weakens his argument that there is no great break separating the two philosophers. Let us turn to consider some specific questions.

Does Voegelin's claim that Plato hypostatized transcendent being not mean that he must read Plato as a "dualist," thereby reenforcing the "doxographic" separation of Plato and Aristotle that he contested earlier? The claim that Plato treated absolute being as a genus of which the varieties of immanent being are species also seems to support the doxographic understanding in a similar way. For it is tantamount to suggesting that Plato did not understand the difference between theoretical and practical problems. Moreover, Voegelin's acceptance of the hypostatization charge implies that something like Aristotle's "immanentization" of philosophical symbols is inevitable, and that symbolizing an experience of transcendence is impossible without the benefit of the Thomistic *analogia entis*.

But perhaps some of the confusion can be clarified by inquiring how Voegelin understands the forms to be "separate." Is the separation one of degree or of difference in kind? If the Platonic forms are not in some way "separate," then how can they be discussed legitimately as symbols of the philosopher's experience of transcendence? One might attempt to solve this problem by suggesting that Voegelin understands Plato's symbolization of the essentially "separate" forms as referring to an aspect of reality which is completely beyond the experiential reality of the human *psychē*. Indeed, this would seem to be the nature of the hypostasis conveyed in the context of Voegelin's agreement with Aristotle's criticism of Plato. But nowhere in Voegelin's own analyses of Platonic dialogues is Plato thought to have claimed that the transcendent forms are wholly other. Even Plato's symbolization of the good as "beyond (*epekeina*) essence in dignity and

power" (*Ibid.*, 112; *Republic*, 509b), does not suggest that the good is completely separate or beyond. Rather, it is "in the intelligible region to reason and the objects of reason" (*Republic*, 508c). In other words, Plato's symbolization of the good as "beyond" is not the same as the Plotinian symbolization of the "One" as beyond both being (*ousia*) and thought (*noesis*).³⁷ Voegelin is certainly aware of this. Therefore, he does not understand the forms as completely separate and his acceptance of the hypostatization charge remains unexplained.

Could Voegelin's agreement with Aristotle be prompted, in part, by his early understanding that the classic philosophers lacked revelatory experience? In other words, does Aristotle's recognition of form in immanent reality signal for Voegelin the apex of the classic ontology before its revelatory completion? I think that it does. For without the mutuality of revelatory experience an hypostatic separation, or world-immanent projection of a falsely imagined transcendence would indeed be inevitable. The symbolization of transcendent reality would then be cut off from experience and in danger of derailing into otherworldly speculation without the explicit awareness that one's cognition is always qualified by "the substance of things hoped for, and the proof of things unseen," namely by faith (Hebrews 11:1).

But Voegelin finds this epistemological feature of faith is expressed only by the Christians. In *The New Science of Politics* this passage is cited in accordance with

³⁷ Cf., Hans-Georg Gadamer, *The Idea of the Good in Platonic-Aristotelian Philosophy*. P. Christopher Smith, trans., (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1986), p. 28.

"the very essence of Christianity" (*NSP*, 122). The theology presupposed in Voegelin's usage of Hebrews 11:1 is found in Thomas Aquinas' *Summa Theologica* (*Ibid.*, n.24). The passage from Hebrews reappears in *The World of the Polis*, in the context of Voegelin's analysis of Heraclitean fragments dealing with similar themes. Here Voegelin claims that there is no reason to diminish the importance of the parallels between the Heraclitean and biblical formulations: "they should be given full weight (though this is rarely done) in appraising the length of preparation for the irruption of transcendental reality in Christianity, as well as the historical momentum which the life of the soul had gathered when it debouched into the experience of Revelation" (*OH II*, 228f.). Nevertheless, Voegelin claims further that the parallels should not be overrated: "There is no touch of Revelation in [Heraclitus'] work; the divine is hidden indeed and does not reveal itself clearly in the soul" (*Ibid.*, 229).

Voegelin, the Greeks and the Christians

Although it appears that reason and revelation are still kept apart, is this done with the same intensity as in the earlier work? Does Voegelin's earlier distinction between Greek "anthropological" and Christian "soteriological" types of truth still hold in *Plato and Aristotle*? In other words, does the Greek soul still reach out to a God in its radically non-human and immovable transcendence with no answering movement from the beyond? Is the Greek philosophical experience and symbolization of participation in transcendent reality still in need of fulfillment by the Christian experience and symbolization of grace? In *Order and History III*, Voegelin answers all of these questions affirmatively.

Aristotle's statement regarding the impossibility of *philia* between God and human beings is repeated as the basis of "the Hellenic position, in contrast with the Christian experience of the *amicitia* between God and man." Although Voegelin intends to show that Aristotle could follow Plato in his philosophical anthropology, and indeed "penetrated into the region of the *nous* in the religious sense," there still remained in Aristotle,

the fundamental hesitation which distinguished the Hellenic from the Christian idea of man, that is, the hesitation to recognize the formation of the human soul through grace; there was missing the experience of faith, the *fides caritate formata* in the Thomistic sense (*OH III*, 364).

In contrast to the Christian symbolization of God's revelatory grace, Voegelin still finds

no mutuality symbolized by the Greeks in the noetic participation (*methexis*) of human in divine reality. "It is true," Voegelin acknowledges, that "the Aristotelian gods also love man (*NE*, 1179a23ff.), but their love does not reach into the soul and form it towards its destiny." Aristotle is said not to have allowed for "a *forma supranaturalis*, for the heightening of the immanent nature of man through the supernaturally forming love of God." The *bios theoretikos* leads toward the Christian *beatitudo* only in a prefigurative way (*Ibid.*, 364, 365). The eschatological direction of historical existence had not yet been symbolized by the Greek philosophers, according to Voegelin (*Ibid.*, 335). This is said to have placed certain limits on their understanding of the ultimate fulfillment of human nature. Christians would symbolize the ultimate fulfillment of human nature as a reality beyond the tensions of historical existence. Ultimate beatitude, in the Christian sense, is a reality which is only prefigured or sensed in historical existence as "the first fruits of the Spirit [*aparchēn tou pneumatos*]" (*cf.*, Rom. 8:18-24). Aristotle, on the other hand, is said to have understood human nature as "an immanent essence like the form of an organic being," the fullest actualization of which "is a problem within the world." Hence, the ultimate fulfillment of human nature in the philosopher's *bios theoretikos*, as Voegelin interprets, is a matter of world-immanent fulfillment:

Although the noetic self is the *theiotaton* in man, and although its actualization is conceived as an immortalization, human nature finds its fulfillment immanently. Transcendence does not transform the soul in

such a manner that it will find fulfillment in transfiguration through Grace in death (*Ibid.*, 364).

Voegelin understands Aristotle's analysis of essence "as a search for perfection, within the more compact experience of *physis*, of nature, which in Christianity is conducted under the assumption that perfection lies in the beyond" (*Ibid.*, 336). Aristotle's alleged "metaphysical construction of human nature as an immanent form" is found to be "technically inadequate," since it cannot address the experiential reality of the soul's perception of transcendence (*Ibid.*, 364). I noted earlier how Voegelin found that Aristotle's tendency to immanentize was "still restrained by his genius" (*Ibid.*, 277). In his final analysis, however, Voegelin's assessment harshens. Aristotle's construction of "an immanent actualization of the supranatural potentiality of the soul" is likened to "a similar theoretical situation at the end of the Middle Ages when, with the disintegration of Christianity and the new wave of immanentism, political thinkers began to evoke the idea of an intramundane realization of perfect human existence" (*Ibid.*, 365).

Plato fares better in Voegelin's assessment. Plato's gods love human beings; but in comparison with Christianity, again, only in a prefigurative way. On the one hand, as Voegelin maintains in his discussion of the *Republic* (592a-b), the Platonic soul's vision of the divine paradigm "set up in heaven [*en ourano*]" is a real ordering force which constitutes the good "politeia within"; later ages have "recognized rightly" in the symbol of the paradigmatic polis "a prefiguration of St. Augustine's conception of

the *civitas Dei*." On the other hand, Voegelin insists that "a prefiguration is not the figuration itself. Plato is not a Christian" (*OH III*, 92). Plato's noetic inquiry, his *zetema*, is described as a "self-illumination" of the soul (*Ibid.*, 85). And we are warned to read into Plato "neither a mystical union with God, nor any other neo-Platonic or Christian developments" (*Ibid.*, 62). While the philosophers' discovery of the *psychē* is said to afford the symbolization of a better understanding of the human participation in reality, "the philosopher's authority, in its turn, will be superseded by the revelation of spiritual order through Christ" (*Ibid.*, 96).

Summary

We have seen that in the nineteen fifties Voegelin makes a number of conflicting claims regarding the nature of the philosophers' reasoned participation in transcendent reality. At times, Voegelin writes that the philosophers do indeed move toward transcendent reality and experience "the flooding of the soul by transcendence" (*OH III*, 363). This is seen, for example, in his analysis of the Platonic vision of the transcendent good. "The vision of the Agathon," Voegelin acknowledges, "does not render a material rule of conduct, but forms the soul through an experience of transcendence" (*Ibid.*, 112). And Plato could symbolize analogically the transcendent Agathon as the sun. Voegelin recognizes further that the *nous*, symbolized as the "eye" that sees the "sun," "receives its power of sight from the sun as it were through an influx." Moreover, the sun itself can be perceived only because it "lends to the eye the power of sight." Voegelin summarizes that "[t]hese are the propositions concerning the sun which serve as the *analogon* (508c) to make intelligible the role of the Agathon in the noetic realm (*noetos topos*)" (*Ibid.*, 113). Does not Voegelin's own exegesis of Plato's symbolization of the transcendent Agathon—particularly in its capacity for the "influx" that "lends" sight to the *nous*—indicate that Plato is expressing an experience of mutuality in his encounter with transcendence?

In this period, Voegelin wishes flatly to deny the experience of mutuality in the philosophers' encounters with transcendence. At several places we are informed that

both Plato and Aristotle reached only the "border of transcendence" (*NSP*, 66, 67; *OH III*, 363). Aristotle's symbolization of political friendship (*philia politike*) is generalized as the "Hellenic position" regarding the impossibility of *philia* between God and human beings. And I have noted several instances where Voegelin clearly thought that the philosophers' efforts were in need of completion by Christian revelatory symbols.

In order to account for the aforementioned range of ambiguity, I will suggest that the following distinction should be recognized: a noticeably different understanding of the Greek soul's noetic participation in transcendence emerges from Voegelin's specific analyses of classic texts than what we find in his more general comparisons of the Greeks and the Christians. If we distinguish between what Voegelin finds in the classic texts themselves and the interpretive framework into which he places the texts, then we will be able to account for the contradictions in his account.

But what is the perspective from which Voegelin is criticizing the Greeks? When Voegelin expresses his dissatisfaction with the level of the philosophers' differentiation of spiritual reality, Thomas Aquinas is usually cited to complete the comparison and illustrate the Hellenic limitation. When he considers the relationship between philosophical language and the reality symbolized, Voegelin maintains that neither Plato nor Aristotle achieved the degree of analytical clarity that is found in the Thomistic *analogia entis* (*OH III*, 276). Nor did the philosophers know of the revelatory mutuality in the relationship between human beings and God which Thomas expresses in his reference to *amicitia* (*NSP*, 78; *OH III*, 364). Finally, Aristotle is said not to have

allowed for the "heightening of the immanent nature of man through the supernaturally forming love of God" (*OH III*, 364).

Voegelin's reference to the "heightening" of an immanent human nature suggests a Thomistic source. In his *Summa Contra Gentiles* (III, i, 53), Thomas describes the heightening of the "created intellect," which is necessary for human beings to know God through reason:

the divine essence is a higher form than any created intellect. So, in order that the divine essence may become the intelligible species for a created intellect, which is needed in order that the divine substance may be seen, it is necessary for the created intellect to be elevated for this purpose by a more sublime disposition.³⁸

Not only does Thomas further claim that "participation in the divine likeness is necessary so that the substance of God may be seen," he argues that "it is not possible for a created substance to attain this vision, except through divine action."³⁹

In the publication of his work from the late forties and early fifties entitled *From Enlightenment to Revolution*, Voegelin mentions Thomas' distinction between the cognition of faith (*cognitio fidei*) and "natural reason" (*FER*, 25, n.19). This is done in partial support of his critique of Voltaire's "identification of a rational view of the world with the philosophy of Newton" in the former's *Elemens de Philosophie de Newton* (*Ibid.*, 24). The most relevant of Thomistic passages to which Voegelin points

³⁸ Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Contra Gentiles*, III, i. Vernon Bourke, trans., (New York: Image Books, 1956), p. 180.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 180, 178.

is the following:

But to man, in order that he may attain his ultimate end [*i.e.*, the love of God], there is added a perfection higher than his own nature, namely, grace, as we have shown. Therefore, it is necessary that, above man's natural knowledge, there also be added to him a knowledge which surpasses natural reason. And this is the knowledge of faith, which is of the things that are not seen by natural reason.⁴⁰

These brief citations go a long way to explain the substance of Voegelin's early account of Greek rationality. In the nineteen fifties, Voegelin found that the philosophers' accounts of reason were limited insofar as they lacked an explicit awareness of mutuality in their noetic participation (*methexis*) in transcendence. The cited texts of St. Thomas show how Voegelin thought the Hellenic deficiency was in need of completion. Hence, Voegelin's understanding of reason vis-à-vis Greek rationality in the nineteen fifties is essentially Thomistic.

⁴⁰ *Summa Contra Gentiles*, III, ii, 152:3, 151. Vernon J. Bourke, trans., (New York: Image Books, 1956), pp. 236, 234f.

**CHAPTER THREE:
"What is Political Reality?" (1966)**

Thomistic Metaphysics and Classical *Noesis*

In 1966, when Voegelin writes "What is Political Reality?", there is a marked change in his understanding of the relation between Christianity and Greek philosophy. Voegelin declares that Thomas is greatly responsible for having "brought about the perversion of noetic exegesis by hardening its terms into a propositional science of principles, universals, and substances" (*Anam.*, 193). The phrase "noetic exegesis" refers to the endeavor of consciousness to interpret its own structure or logos (*Ibid.*, 148). Moreover, Thomas' "hardening," which is thought to result in theological and philosophical dogmatism, is said to have "strongly provoked" the ideological rebellion of the Enlightenment *philosophes* (*Ibid.*, 194). This striking assessment of Thomas prompted Dante Germino to protest: "Can we be sure that Thomas corrupted the Greek philosophical experience in this way? Does not Voegelin himself acknowledge Thomas' analysis of the *analogia entis* (analogy of being) as a significant achievement in the history of Western thought?"⁴¹ The first question is certainly legitimate, and would deserve more attention elsewhere. But the tone of Germino's second question is intended to compel an all or nothing acceptance of Thomas in the neo-Thomist fashion. Yet

⁴¹ Dante Germino, "Eric Voegelin's *Anamnesis*." *Southern Review*, 7 (1971), p. 86.

Voegelin had recognized more than a decade earlier that to counter the modernistic reduction of the church's "spiritual drama" to a "psychology of intraworldly human experiences" is a task that would require "a new Thomas rather than a neo-Thomist" (*FER*, 22). Nevertheless, even a new Thomas seems insufficient given his later criticism. Thomas is criticized as much as he is praised in "What is Political Reality?" and several of Voegelin's later works.⁴²

What is the basis of Voegelin's criticism of Thomas' account of Greek rationality? Voegelin finds that Thomas tended to overlook the experiential origin of the classic philosophers' symbols that arose on the occasion of their noetic exegesis. Without proper recognition of the experiences that motivate symbolization, according to Voegelin, Thomas was precluded from recovering the true meaning of the philosophical symbols themselves. This is the basis of Thomas' allegedly dogmatic misunderstanding of Greek rationality in particular.

To be sure, Thomas is not thought to have been uniquely responsible for the dogmatic misunderstanding of philosophy. He lived and wrote, in Voegelin's understanding, at a time when philosophical dogmatism had existed already through fifteen centuries. It is the formulations in the classic accounts themselves that are said to be partly responsible for the widespread misappropriation of the philosophic life which they initiated. In particular, Voegelin claims that the articulation of "reason" (*nous*) in contemplation of its own structure, the classical philosophers' *noesis*, "offer[s] many

⁴² Cf., *Anam.*, 198; *ODE*, 38ff.; *QDD*, 376ff.

points at which dogmatic misunderstandings could arise" (*Anam.*, 193). But Thomas is held particularly responsible for having "crystallized" the dogmatic misunderstanding of the philosophic life into the rigidity of propositional metaphysics:

The term "Metaphysics," contracted from *meta ta physica*, did not appear until the high Middle Ages. It seems to have had a brief Arab prehistory and then was introduced into Western thought by Thomas, in the *prooemium* of his commentary to Aristotle's metaphysics, as a concept for a philosophical science founded on natural reason.⁴³

Voegelin insists that neither Plato nor Aristotle were "metaphysicians"; and, consequently, Aristotle "never wrote a 'metaphysics'" (*Anam.*, 193). In fact, the term "metaphysics" is not even to be found in the whole of Aristotle's text commonly referred to by that name (*Conversations*, 42). The subject matter of this collection of discourses (*logoi*) is described alternatively by Aristotle as *protē philosophia* (first philosophy) or *theologia* (theology). And Voegelin, like Aristotle, uses the term "theology" in reference to much the same type of speech about the divine for which Plato originally coined the term. In other words, Voegelin's theology is *not* constituted by the application of dogmatized metaphysical propositions—*e.g.* "immutability," "omniscience," "omnipresence"—to Judaeo-Christian revelatory symbols (*Ibid.*, 42f.). The most that these concepts can yield is the awareness that one is indeed *not* immutable and all-knowing. Voegelin does not allow his theological analyses to broaden into propositional statements

⁴³ This is the first instance of Voegelin's account of the term "metaphysics." A similar formulation reappears at least four more times in his later work (*cf.*, *Conversations*, 40ff. [1967], 144 [1976]; *AR*, 79f. [1973 dictation]; *QDD*, 382 [1985]).

about the divine nature, the immateriality or the pre- or post-existence of the soul. But, more importantly, it would seem that this was also the case with Platonic and Aristotelian theology. This raises several questions: Can Plato still be charged with hypostatizing transcendent reality if he is not a metaphysician? Can Aristotle still be understood as having construed an "immanentist metaphysics"? Can one speak reasonably about divine reality in particular without recourse to language that describes that which is beyond the physical? These questions, and others, will be given greater attention as my analysis of Voegelin's later account of Aristotelian *noesis* unfolds.

In "What is Political Reality?", Voegelin understands the dogmatization of the philosophic life to have occurred "immediately *after* Aristotle" (*Anam.*, 193; emphasis added). This is a change from *Plato and Aristotle*, where the Aristotelian tendency to immanentize Platonic symbols of world-transcendent reality was noted as the beginning of a long history of derailment (*cf.*, *OH III*, 275-278, 282, 362-366). But to whom does the post-Aristotelian derailment refer? It is the Stoics, who are said to have "transformed the original language-formulations of philosophy, which are language symbols expressing steps in a meditative process of experience, into propositions concerning the realities symbolized" (*Conversations*, 40). Thomas' "metaphysical" crystallization of an essentially Stoic derailment is then said to have "determined the further destinies of 'metaphysics'" right through to the "antimetaphysical taboo, in the shadow of which contemporary philosophy is still laboring" (*Anam.*, 193; *cf.*, *OH IV*, 36-43).

Once the philosophical quest for wisdom concerning the relations of order between divine and human reality had dried up into the logical puzzles of propositional metaphysics, the *philosophes* of the eighteenth century "had no trouble in throwing overboard the doubtful science of doubtful principles and substances" (*Ibid.*, 194). However, the rebellion was not without its merits, Voegelin argues. Insofar as the eighteenth century rebellion against dogmatic theology and metaphysics "has freed socially effective [*sozialwirksame*] areas of the world, society, and history that the social oppression of orthodoxy [*der Sozialterror der Orthodoxie*] sought to keep under cover" Voegelin considers it to have been an "historical accomplishment in the service of noesis" (*Ibid.*, 188; *Anam. Ger.*, 329). Nevertheless, in Voegelin's estimation, the rebellious overthrow of "metaphysics" became a mutiny against the order of being itself.

Although the rebellion of enlightenment was in the process of breaking free from dogmatic "mortgages of truth," it could no longer remain true to an essence of rationality which had been discovered and forgotten in centuries of dogmatic abuse; it could no longer remain essentially true to the rationality that it used so effectively against dogmatism. Insofar as the experiential reality engendering the symbols of "metaphysics" was itself denied or reduced axiomatically to the status of uncritical beliefs and opinions, the *hybris* of Enlightenment was attempting something analogous to throwing an entire ship over its own boards. Rather than remembering the larger horizon of the order of reality, it further eclipsed, in Voegelin's account, the predogmatic Platonic-Aristotelian origin of the symbol "reason" (*Ibid.*, 206, 161). And with Voltaire begins "the attempt

at evoking an image of man in the cosmos under the guidance of intraworldly reason" (*FER*, 23). In short, Voegelin argues that the Enlightenment conception of an autonomous, or completely world-immanent, "human" reason reveals that the modern "egophanic" rebellion in the name of "reason" has remained essentially unenlightened regarding the experiential, theophanic origin of the symbol. Hence, Voegelin concludes that the antimetaphysical resentment of modern ideologists "is not directed against the classical noesis, of which they know nothing, but against Thomas's design of a propositional 'metaphysics' treating of universals, principles, and substances" (*Anam.*, 194).

We should not be surprised to find, given this brief synopsis of his changing estimation of Thomas, that Voegelin's account of Aristotelian *noesis* in "What is Political Reality?" (1966) is remarkably different from the one found in *Plato and Aristotle* (1957). In this chapter I will be concerned with analyzing the substance of the change. By focusing primarily upon the earliest text in which Voegelin's reassessment of Aristotelian *noesis* is discernable, the full import of the change will become evident. The juxtaposition of the two accounts will allow, then, for a more detailed hypothesis regarding why the change came about.

Reason in "The Consciousness of the Ground"

The earliest account of Voegelin's reassessment of Aristotelian *noesis* is found in "The Consciousness of the Ground," the first chapter of the larger essay entitled "What is Political Reality?" (*Anam.*, 147-174; *Anam. Ger.*, 287-315). Besides being the first instance of the change in Voegelin's account of Greek rationality, there are other good reasons for concentrating presently on "The Consciousness of the Ground:" Aristotle's texts are the primary source for Voegelin's analysis of "noetic experience"; and an important explication of the participatory essence of Aristotelian *noesis* is given noteworthy priority.

Within the context of the larger essay, "The Consciousness of the Ground" attempts to recount the classic experience of the "noetic interpretation" of the soul's own structure. It is a chapter on the nature of reason. Although the Aristotelian *nous* is not translated as "reason" in this essay, it is evident that Voegelin's concern with *noesis* as a structure of consciousness can be considered an account of reason. In 1965, Voegelin wrote: "The ground of existence, in Platonic and Aristotelian philosophy—but especially in Aristotelian—is the *nous*: reason or spirit or intellect...Here the model is man and his experience of such a ground, hence reason is the ground of existence for man" (*Conversations*, 4).

The essay's opening sentences reveal a number of changes in Voegelin's analytical focus:

The tension in political reality, which historically produces the phenomenon of the noetic interpretation, is not a thing about which objective propositions could be formed. Rather, it must be traced back to its origin in the consciousness of men who desire true knowledge of order. The consciousness of concrete men is the place where order is experienced (*Anam.*, 147).

The most immediately recognizable change concerns his account of consciousness as the place where order is experienced. Voegelin suggests that the tension in political reality that engenders the noetic interpretation of order must be traced back to its origin in the concrete consciousness of philosophers who experience the desire for a truthful knowledge of order. Compared to Voegelin's analysis of *noesis* in *Plato and Aristotle*, there is now a significant terminological difference. Previously, Voegelin's analytic terminology remained closer to Plato and Aristotle's own: the aspect of human beings by which the tension toward the divine ground is experienced was termed *psychē*, or, more specifically, *nous-in-psychē*. Now Voegelin analyzes the classic philosophers' experiences with the term "consciousness," denoting the aspect of concrete human beings by which the tension is experienced. Previously, *psychē* was the "sensorium of transcendence"; now "consciousness" symbolizes this experience (*cf.*, *Anam.*, 163). Voegelin uses the terms *psychē* and consciousness synonymously (*cf.*, *AR*, 112). The alteration of terminology is possible, I argue, due to Voegelin's new understanding that such symbols can be "equivalents" with regard to their engendering experiences (*Anam.*, 157ff.; *EESH*, 115-133).

Voegelin does not intend a radical departure from his earlier analyses of the Greeks with this change in terminology. In "The Consciousness of the Ground," Voegelin attempts not only to follow the classic effort, but also to take up where the classic analyses left off. He does not intend simply to offer an interpretation of the Aristotelian consciousness of the ground. This is certainly part of his concern. But he attempts to go beyond the classical exegesis in order to develop his own account of the differentiation of consciousness. His analysis of consciousness tries, in part, to correct important points where the Aristotelian endeavor to interpret the structure of the *psychē* is said to have remained too compact or inattentive to possibilities of abuse. Voegelin claims:

No longer can we speak, without qualification, of "human nature," "the nature of society," or of "the essence of history"...For symbols of this type, although they belong to the area of classical noesis, are characterized by the fact that experienced realities are expressed, through them, with the still compact immediacy of prenoetic, cosmic primary experience (*Anam.*, 206).

He switches his interpretive focus to "consciousness" as a relatively undifferentiated equivalent to the classically differentiated *psychē*, I suggest, in order to free his own analysis from limitations perceived in the essentially successful Aristotelian prototype.

Voegelin's analysis of Aristotle's *noesis* is an explication of the earliest textual account of human consciousness seeking to become explicit to itself. Voegelin's nearly exclusive reliance upon Aristotle's vocabulary in "The Consciousness of the Ground" should come as a surprise. Aristotle was charged in Voegelin's earlier work with having

curiously transformed the Platonic experience of transcendence in his "intellectual thinning-out" of the "fullness of experience which Plato expressed in the richness of his myth" (*OH III*, 276). Why does Voegelin now turn favorably to Aristotle? It would seem that Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, which Voegelin had not analyzed in *Plato and Aristotle*, provides him with a suitably subtle terminology with which to begin his own analysis of consciousness.

What is the beginning of "reason" on the level of conscious experience? Why did human beings ever begin to speak about "reason"? Voegelin contends that 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." But one could not recognize one's existential ignorance as such, it is argued, were one not already "in the throes of a restless urge to escape from ignorance (*pheugein ten agnoian*) in order to seek knowledge (*episteme*)." Voegelin translates the Aristotelian articulation of such confusion or doubt (*diaporein, aporein*) in the following manner: "whoever is perplexed (*aporon*) and wonders (*thaumazon*) is conscious (*oetai*) of being ignorant (*agnoein*)" (*Anam.*, 148; *Meta.*, 982b18).

The recognition of one's essential ignorance breaks forth into questions concerning the "where-from?" and the "where-to?" of all that exists. These are what Voegelin calls questions concerning the "ground." But what is the ground? Voegelin stated, in 1965, that the divine ground of existence refers to "an experienced reality of

a transcendent nature towards which one lives in a tension. So, the experience of the tension towards transcendent being is the experiential basis for all analysis in such matters" (*Conversations*, 8). The divine ground, therefore, is a term by means of which philosophers have expressed their awareness of transcendent reality.

An important recent example of questioning in tension toward the ground, which appears throughout Voegelin's later work, is found in the well-known questions of G. W. Leibniz:

- (1) Why is there something; why not nothing?
- (2) Why is that something as it is, and not different?
(cf., *Ibid.*, 2).

Voegelin observes that, when translated into conventional philosophical vocabulary, these questions become the great questions of existence and essence, respectively. Variants of these questions have been posed in all known ages of history. But why are these questions asked by human beings? Why is it that, historically, we have questioned the nature and sense of existence? Why have human beings not found it possible simply to "go through life" without posing the question of ultimacy? Why have some human beings entered repetitiously into the stage of questioning the ultimate sense of their existence, which Voegelin has called "questioning restlessness"?

Voegelin's answer to these questions takes us back to the fundamental experience of ignorance concerning the ground and sense of existence. As Voegelin formulated the experience in 1974:

Man is not a self-created, autonomous being carrying the origin and meaning of his existence within himself. He is not a divine *causa sui*; from the experience of his life in precarious existence within the limits of birth and death there rather arises the wondering question about the ultimate ground, the *aitia* or *prote arche*, of all reality and specifically his own (*Anam.*, 92).⁴⁴

The fundamental consciousness of ignorance is itself a type of knowledge. In other words, one's consciousness of ignorance is never that of complete ignorance. Consequently, there arises from this condition of questioning restlessness the desire to know more about the structure of reality in tension toward the pole which is symbolized as the transcendent ground of existence (*Anam.*, 148). Since the resulting search (*zetesis*) for the truth of the ground is not completely blind but carries with it the knowledge of ignorance, Voegelin characterizes it as "knowing questioning and questioning knowledge [*wissendes Fragen und fragendes Wissen*]" (*Ibid.*; *Anam. Ger.*, 289). To be sure, in order to ask a question one must already have some sense of the direction or goal to which the question is leading. Nonetheless, as Voegelin maintains, one's questioning "still may miss its goal (*telos*) or be satisfied with a false one." But how can one know that one has not missed the mark or settled for a false ultimacy in one's questioning? Apparently, the search (*zetesis*) is in need of guidance; and "[t]hat which gives direction to the desire and thus imparts content to it is the ground itself [*der Grund selbst*], insofar

⁴⁴ I will quote passages from Voegelin's article "Reason: The Classic Experience" (1974) and *The Ecumenic Age* (1974) when the later formulations help to clarify those of 1966 without changing the substance of the account of *noesis*.

as it moves man by attraction (*kinetai*)" (*Ibid.*, 148-49). The philosopher's awareness of transcendent reality is what initiates the restlessness in the soul that motivates the search. The "answer" to the search is then symbolized by the "divine ground," which is now perceived to have been the cause of the restless search in the first place. Hence, in Voegelin's analysis, the Aristotelian experience of *noesis* begins and ends with the transcendent, divine ground moving the entire process in the philosopher's questioning consciousness.

Voegelin cautions, however, that the experience of noetic tension toward the divine ground is a unity. The experience as a whole "may be interpreted but not analyzed into parts." He then interprets the experience retrospectively from the "answer" in the transcendent ground itself to the questioning restlessness from which the philosopher began his search:

Without the *kinesis* of being attracted by the ground, there would be no desire for it; without the desire, no questioning in confusion; without 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 (*Anam.*, 149; *cf.*, 63).

Voegelin relates that Aristotle uses the term *nous* for the "directional factor of knowledge in the tension of consciousness toward the ground." However, since Aristotle uses the term in a variety of ways, Voegelin suggests that it is advisable, for the purpose of his essay, to identify the "directional factor [*Richtungsfaktor*]" in consciousness and to fix it

terminologically as the *ratio*.

The *ratio*, in Voegelin's analysis, also symbolizes the fundamental "content" or structure of consciousness, *viz.*, that to which Voegelin refers as the "material structure" (*Sachstruktur*, *Sachgerüst*) of consciousness.⁴⁵ It is important to notice Voegelin's distinction. For, as previously noted, Voegelin does not intend only to offer an account of Aristotle's experience. Rather, he is attempting to go beyond the level of differentiation achieved in classical *noesis*. And this distinction is one of the important points at which Voegelin's analysis diverges from Aristotle's own. In the last volume of *Order and History*, the difference between *nous* and *ratio* reappears as two "modes of consciousness," namely, "luminosity" and "intentionality" respectively (*cf.*, *OH V*, 15).

Once the transcendent ground is recognized and symbolized by consciousness, the *ratio* becomes intelligible as the tensional structure within consciousness that leads it toward the symbolization of the ground. Rationality, Voegelin contends, has the character of what Henri Bergson has called the "open soul."⁴⁶ The open soul is characterized by its willingness and non-ideological freedom to apperceive all aspects of

⁴⁵ Ellis Sandoz blurs Voegelin's distinction between *nous* and *ratio* in his analysis of this passage. Sandoz claims that "*Nous* is, by Voegelin's account, both the directional factor of consciousness and the substantial structure or order of consciousness" (*The Voegelinian Revolution*, 158). Whereas Voegelin claims explicitly that both the *Richtungsfaktor* and the *Sachstruktur* of consciousness are symbolized by the *ratio* (*Anam. Ger.*, 289). Voegelin's usage of the Latin term "*ratio*" would seem to have originated in Thomas' distinction between the *intellectus*, as "noetic reason," and the *ratio*, as dianoetic reason (*cf.*, *Wisdom*, 356).

⁴⁶ Voegelin takes the symbols of "*l'âme ouverte*" and "*l'âme close*" from Henri Bergson's *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion* (Paris, 1932).

reality given in consciousness, including the transcendent ground. Conversely, the soul's "self-closure against the ground [*das Sich-Verschließen gegenüber dem Grund*]" characterizes its irrationality.⁴⁷

Does Voegelin's reference to the divine ground that "moves man by attraction" indicate that he now predicates *mutuality* to the divine-human encounter in Aristotelian *noesis*? It certainly does. Voegelin claims that:

Aristotle adds to the exegesis of the noetic desire for the ground and the attraction by the ground the symbol of mutual participation (*metalepsis*) of two entities called *nous* (1072b20ss)(*Anam.*, 149).

But to whose exegesis of the experience does Voegelin find that Aristotle "adds" (*überbaut*) the predicate of mutuality? Voegelin tends to associate the term *methexis* only with Plato's account of "participation" and *metalepsis* with the account of Aristotle (*e.g.*, *Conversations*, 47). And mutuality is predicated explicitly on the latter term (*metalepsis*). At this point in Voegelin's analysis, it appears that Aristotle is the only one to add explicitly the predicate of mutuality to the experience of a divine-human "participation" as the basis of reason. Aristotle's exclusivity in this regard is only apparent, however. For Voegelin also finds mutuality expressed in Platonic accounts of

⁴⁷ *Anam. Ger.*, 289. I have found it necessary to break with Gerhart Niemeyer's translation, which states that "the closing of the soul with regard to the ground" is its irrationality (*Anam.*, 149). It is important to note, in the German *Sich-Verschließen*, that the soul closes *itself* against the ground. In this sense, irrationality is a perversion of human nature based in (what Voegelin later called) "the refusal to apperceive" all of what can be known in consciousness as reality—a phrase he takes from Doderer's *Apperzeptionsverweigerung* (*cf.*, *Anam.*, 102).

the encounter.⁴⁸ The "addition," then, must be assumed to refer to pre-Socratic accounts. It is one of the features that distinguishes Platonic-Aristotelian philosophy.

Aristotle's "mutual participation" refers to the association of two *nous* entities: one human and the other divine. Voegelin observes that by *nous* Aristotle "understands both the human capacity for knowing questioning about the ground and also the ground of being itself [*den Seinsgrund selbst*], which is experienced as the directing mover of the questions [*der als der richtungsweisende Beweger des Fragens erfahren wird*]" (*Anam.*, 149; *Anam. Ger.*, 290). Voegelin's *Seinsgrund selbst* is a reference to Aristotle's Unmoved Mover, or that "which moves without being moved [*ho ou kinoumenon kinei*]" (*Meta.*, 1072a25).⁴⁹

How can the divine and human *nous* have the same name? Would this not indicate the equality of humanity and divinity? Aristotle gives the divine and human *nous* "entities" the same name, Voegelin argues, because in his thinking, "synonymity of expression means equality of genus by genesis" (*Anam.*, 149). The phrase "by genesis" is decisive for understanding this passage properly. Voegelin is quick to point out that

⁴⁸ See Voegelin's essays on "Immortality: Experience and Symbol" (given on January 14, 1965) and "Reason: The Classic Experience" (1974), where *methexis* and *metalepsis* are used as equivalent symbols for expressing "the mutual participation (*methexis*, *metalepsis*) of human in divine, and divine in human reality" (*Anam.*, 103; cf. *Immortality*, 89).

⁴⁹ Aristotle responds succinctly to the question as to how the Prime Mover can move the human soul without being in motion itself: "it causes motion as being an object of love [or the beloved *erōmenon*], whereas all other things cause motion because they are themselves in motion" (*Meta.*, 1072b4).

Aristotle's thinking is still in the process of detaching itself from "the symbolism of myth" (*Ibid.*, 149). But here it is not altogether clear whether Voegelin understands this as a detachment from Homer's myth of the cosmos, or from Plato's myth of the soul. The former possibility seems more plausible (*cf.*, *Ibid.*, 68, 206): the genesis of the human *nous* from the divine *Nous* closely parallels the demiurgic fashioning of *nous-in-psyche-in-soma* in Plato's *Timaeus* (30b; 37a).

Voegelin cites two passages from the *Metaphysics* in order to account for why the two *nous* entities have the same name. He translates Aristotle's Greek in the following way:

»Denn jedes Ding (*ousia*) wird geschaffen durch das, was gleichen Namens ist (*ek synonymou*)« (1070a4ff.). (Each thing (*ousia*) will be created through that which is of the same name.)

And:

»Das Ding, das anderen Dingen die Gleichnamigkeit (*to synonymon*) mitteilt, ist ihnen gegenüber aufs Höchste das Ding dieser Art (*malista aouto*)« (993b20ff.). (The thing that communicates the synonymy of the other things, is comparatively the highest thing of this type.) (*Anam. Ger.*, 290).⁵⁰

⁵⁰ I have broken with Niemeyer's translation of these passages since he has ignored Voegelin's German translation of Aristotle's Greek. Niemeyer even places the Greek terms *ousia* and *ek synonymou* in the wrong quotation. He translates the passages in the following way: "We note that all primary things come into being out of something with the same name' (1070a4ff.). 'To explain a thing (*ousia*) it is necessary to know which among a number of things that have a name in common gives that name to the others (*ek synonymou*), for it is it which explains what other things are (*malista aouto*)' (993b20ff.)" (*Anam.*, 149).

Voegelin uses these passages to show the continued importance of mythic symbols in Aristotle's exegesis even after *noesis* has afforded consciousness the luminous insight of articulating its own structure. Voegelin writes: "In the sense of the mythic symbolism of synonymy through genesis, Aristotle thus can understand the tension of consciousness as the mutual participation (*metalepsis*)[*die wechselseitige Partizipation*] of the two *nous* entities" (*Anam.*, 150). The human *nous* engages in *noesis*, that is, in the act of knowing questioning and questioning knowledge. It is capable, furthermore, of "apprehending participation in the ground of being." But the noetic participation is possible, Voegelin argues, only "by virtue of the preceding genetic participation of the divine in the human *nous*" (*Ibid.*).

In Voegelin's account, "synonymy," "genesis," and "mutual participation" are mythic symbols that Aristotle allows to enter his exegesis of "noetic consciousness." But what has myth to do with symbolizing the philosopher's experience of reason? Has Aristotle failed to be completely rational? He certainly has not, Voegelin argues. Aristotle's usage of mythic symbols "is not a methodological derailment; rather it is the residue of prenoetic knowledge of order and the background without which the noetic knowledge of order would have no function" (*Ibid.*, 151). Even after noetic insight into the order of consciousness has differentiated the rationality of consciousness as being moved by, and tending openly toward the divine ground, "[o]ur knowledge of order remains primarily mythical" (*Ibid.*, 150). *Noesis* functions as a "differentiating correction" to the "preknowledge of man and his order that stems from the compact

primary experience of the cosmos, with its expression in the myth." But Voegelin emphasizes that *noesis* does not replace the truth of former mythic symbolizations of transcendent reality (*Ibid.*). *Noesis* differentiates the compact understanding of "the relations between the ground of being and man, ground of being and world, man and world, as well as the relations between things in the world, so that the reality-image of being replaces the reality-image of the cosmic primary experience" (*Ibid.*, 206). It is important to emphasize, Voegelin would argue, that the philosopher's noetic vision "does not discover objects that until then were unknown, but it discovers relations of order in a reality that was also known to the primary experience of the cosmos" (*Ibid.*, 134). *Noesis* cannot go beyond mythic symbolizations of transcendent reality and lay bear the essential nature of divinity. Thus, myth and *noesis* cannot be separated radically. Aristotle's mythic symbolization "ingresses into the noetic exegesis because the *noesis* egresses from the myth, as it interprets its logos" (*Ibid.*, 152).

Aristotle is credited, furthermore, with the recognition that the pre-philosophic lover of myth, the *philomythos*, was "in a sense" also a lover of wisdom, a *philosophos*, since both myth and philosophy are expressions of the "wondering" (*thaumazein*) by which "[a]ll people are equally excited" (*Anam.*, 157, 93).⁵¹ With this observation,

⁵¹ Voegelin's "all people" translates the opening words of the *Metaphysics*. Aristotle says: "All men [*pantes anthrōpoi*] naturally desire knowledge. An indication of this is our esteem for the senses; for apart from their use we esteem them for their own sake" (980a22ff.)(*cf.*, *Anam.*, 183). In the last volume of *Order and History*, Voegelin interprets this statement as opening "the great reflective study of consciousness, the act of remembering its range from sense perception to its participation in the divine *Nous*."

Voegelin finds that Aristotle has taken "the first steps toward a theory of equivalent symbols and experiences" (*EESH*, 125*f.*). In "Reason: The Classic Experience" (1974), Voegelin offers the following example of how mythic consciousness is akin to the searching *ratio* of *noesis*: "When Homer and Hesiod trace the origin of the gods and all things back to Ouranos, Gaia, and Okeanos, they express themselves in the medium of theogonic speculation, but they are engaged in the same search of the ground as Aristotle himself" (*Anam.*, 93; *Meta.*, 983b28*ff.*). The experience and symbolization of noetic consciousness does not change human nature, Voegelin is suggesting, but makes it more explicit as the conscious tension toward the transcendent ground. *Noesis* lifts the reality of participation "into the light of consciousness." But participation is still a reality "even when it is not fully conscious of its own character, i.e., even when it is not knowledge about knowledge." The desire for knowledge is not the experiential motivation of *noesis* alone, "but of every experience of participation...It is always man's existential transcending toward the ground, even when the ground does not become conscious as the transcendent pole of the desire" (*Ibid.*, 183).

Yet "[i]f this sentence were torn out of its noetic context," Voegelin warns, "it could be ridiculed as an empirically false statement; for quite a few men obviously do not desire to know but are engaged in the construction of Second Realities [*i.e.*, ideologies] and, obsessed by their defensive obtuseness, refuse to apperceive reality. If, however, we do not literalize the sentence and thereby destroy its noetic validity, it will express a thinker's conscious openness toward the paradox of existential consciousness; and it will furthermore symbolize this openness as the potential of 'all men,' even though the potential be deformed through acts of oblivion by all too many" (*OH V*, 47).

The Problems of Objectification

Voegelin recognizes several problems that result from interpreting both non-noetic and noetic symbolizations of order as experiences of "participation." The philosopher's noetic consciousness may cause the "objectification" (*Vergegenständlichung*)⁵² of non-noetic interpretations such as those of the epic poets, tragedians, and Orphics. Voegelin also realizes that the philosopher's noetic consciousness may subsume the non-noetic accounts of reality under the category of "participation" in the "existential tension toward the ground" (*Anam.*, 152). But what happens when the philosopher uses the term "participation" to express the experience of *nous* interpreting its *own* structure? A logical circularity results in which the philosopher's participation appears to be "a species that comes under itself as the genus." The apparent circularity occurs, Voegelin argues, only when the term "participation" is objectified. It is originally a term expressing an experience "in the process of meditation,

⁵² Following John Kirby, I do not accept Niemeyer's translation of *Vergegenständlichung* as "objectivization." Kirby argues: (1) Voegelin has never used the term "objectivization"; (2) the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* does not mention the term, although "objectification," has been used since 1856; (3) in the context of addressing a similar function of consciousness (in *OH III*, 192), Voegelin refers to the characteristics of the "objectifying consciousness"; (4) the term "objectivization" has been used by "certain writers" of a Kantian and neo-Kantian persuasion (Carl Hempel and Ernst Cassirer) and their translators. And "[i]n light of Voegelin's expressed rejection of the Kantian and neo-Kantian approaches to the philosophy of consciousness," Kirby maintains, "such associations should be avoided." See John S. Kirby, "The Relation of Eric Voegelin's 'What is Political Reality?' to His Order and History." Ph.D. Dissertation, St. Michael's College, Institute of Christian Thought, University of Toronto, 1980, pp. 250f.

in which the noetic experience interprets itself." The symbols of noetic exegesis, Voegelin argues, "are not developed as concepts relating to non-noetic objects" (*Ibid.*). If they were, then *noesis* would be simply the "science" of non-noetic "objects." But *noesis* also symbolizes the knowledge of its own structure in tension toward the divine ground. If it were not understood in this way, then the apparent circularity of *noesis* would have *nous* as its own non-noetic object—a patent absurdity.

Voegelin recognizes that even if these problems are avoided, there still remains another: "the non-noetic phenomena are indeed maneuvered into a kind of object position [*Gegenstandsrolle*], by the analysis and classification of the noesis" (*Ibid.*).

Voegelin formulates his solution to this problem in the following thesis:

all participation also contains the component of knowledge about itself and its character—on the scale of compactness and differentiation, direction and misdirection, openness and closing, acquiescence and revolt, etc. On this scale of knowledge, participation has degrees of transparence for itself, up to the optimum clarity of the noetic consciousness (*Ibid.*, 153).

Here Voegelin recognizes that "all participation," not just the noetic type of the philosophers, "contains the component of knowledge about itself and its character." The noetic "objectification" (*Vergegenständlichung*), therefore, does not refer to the experience of participation itself. This would mean that the philosophers, as noetic interpreters, would be the sole participants in the tension toward the ground, and the mythic, theologic, and other non-noetic interpreters of reality would be devoid of any degree of participation in the consciousness of transcendence. If philosophers were the sole

possessors of noetic-participatory consciousness, humanity would be divided into two distinct natures: the noetic and the non-noetic. But Aristotle and Voegelin both realize that this is not the case empirically.

All desire for knowledge implies a quest for the ground. And the "human universality of the desiring and searching participation in the ground results further," Voegelin claims, "in the equivalence of the symbolisms in which the consciousness of the ground is expressed" (*Ibid.*, 158). "Equivalence" is an ambiguous symbol. It should be stressed that the equivalence refers to the engendering experiences, and not to the resulting symbolic forms themselves.⁵³ Symbolic accounts of essentially similar experiences "may considerably differ from each other on the scales of compactness and differentiation, of finding and missing the ground" (*Ibid.*, 159). Voegelin's scale of compactness and differentiation, therefore, evaluates all non-noetic symbolic forms based upon their ability to illuminate the tension in consciousness toward the ground. The philosopher's objectification of less transparent, symbolic accounts of order does not question the fundamental experience of participation itself; rather, it illuminates "the difference of truth that arises in the longing search for insight into the right relation to the ground" (*Ibid.*, 153).

⁵³ In his article "Equivalences of Experience and Symbolization in History," Voegelin further guards against a possible hypostasis of "experience" as an absolute (*EESH*, 123). He insists that ultimately we must "push the equivalence of symbols, that we have already extended to the experiences engendering them, still further back to the depth [of the *psychē*] by which experience lives" (*Ibid.*, 129). The equivalence in the depth signifies only a "process...that becomes manifest in the phenomena of the historical field but is otherwise inaccessible" (*Ibid.*, 130).

Voegelin's accommodation of all attempts to articulate the order of consciousness in tension toward the ground must not be confused with the modern, ostensibly liberal, equation of all opinions about the meaning and structure of existence. Voegelin argues that the reality of participation discovered through *noesis* is knowledge (*Ibid.*, 183). The scale of compactness and differentiation, direction and misdirection, etc., is not offered as one man's uncritical, subjective opinion. Rather, Voegelin asserts that it is a "scale of knowledge" against which the different modes of participation are revealed as having different degrees of transparency for their own order (*Ibid.*, 153). Voegelin claims:

Even though myth and philosophy, as symbolic expressions for the experience of wondering and participation in the ground, are equivalent, they nevertheless do not achieve equal knowledge of truth concerning the ground (*Ibid.*, 157f.).

Voegelin is clearly arguing for a balance of consciousness. The balance itself is discerned in the endeavor of consciousness to interpret its own structure. In the process it is discovered, Voegelin claims, that "[p]articipation with a low grade of transparency is still participation; and the noetic illumination of consciousness in the tension to the ground is not anything more than participation" (*Ibid.*, 153). Voegelin rejects any attempt to derive absolute knowledge, or ignorance, from the philosopher's, the priest's, or the poet's consciousness of existence in tension toward the transcendent ground. This would abolish the truth of the experience of tension in consciousness itself. One would, thereby, transport oneself imaginatively into an ideological Second Reality, constituting

a denial of reality as experienced. Against such an indulgence, Voegelin argues that the "perspective of participation must be understood in the fullness of its disturbing quality":

At the center of his existence man is unknown to himself and must remain so, for the part of being that calls itself man could be known fully only if the community of being and its drama in time were known as a whole...Knowledge of the whole, however, is precluded by the identity of the knower with the partner, and ignorance of the whole precludes essential knowledge of the part (*OH I*, 1, 2).

Conscious existence remains tensional existence—even after, or especially after *noesis* has lifted the reality of the transcendent ground into the light of consciousness.

Summary

We may now step back from this brief sketch of Voegelin's later account of Aristotelian *noesis* to consider explicitly what changes have occurred that distinguish Voegelin's later and earlier accounts.

In the fifties, Voegelin maintained that Aristotle's statement regarding the impossibility of friendship between gods and human beings (due to their radical inequality) was true of the Greek philosophers' experience of transcendence generally. In Voegelin's early conception, the classic philosophers reached out to "a God who rests in his immovable transcendence," but they found no "answering movement from the beyond" (*NSP*, 77, 78). To be sure, Voegelin spoke readily of the philosophers' "experiences of transcendence," of the soul's participation in the divine, and of "participation in the Aristotelian Nous" (e.g., *OH II*, 206f.; *NSP*, 6; *OH III*, 321). But, in most cases, such participatory language was immediately qualified so as not to suggest that the philosophers' participation in the transcendent *Nous* was a revelatory experience of the divine. In all cases, the experience of mutuality in the divine-human encounter was denied to the complex of experiences symbolized in Greek rationality. The philosophers "sensed" the unseen transcendent measure, but it was never revealed (*OH II*, 52). The experience of mutuality in the human relation with God was the specific difference of Christian truth (*NSP*, 78).

By 1966, Voegelin claims that Aristotle expresses his awareness of the mutual

participation of divine and human reality in the experience of reason (*noesis*). Aristotelian *noesis* lifts the structure of this participation into "the light of consciousness" as a tension in one's questioning engendered by and leading ultimately to the divine ground. The philosopher's consciousness is aware of its fundamental ignorance concerning the "where-from?", the "what-is?", and the "where-to?" of existence. The philosopher's consciousness of ignorance is said to engender a state of questioning unrest, which ultimately discovers the transcendent ground of being as the mover and originator of the rational quest itself. "Out of a comprehensive complex of knowledge," Voegelin remarks in 1966, "the classical *noesis* differentiates the consciousness of the ground by way of love of God, of being moved by grace of the ground to the point of feeling compelled to 'turn around' from being lost in the world toward inclination to the ground" (*Anam.*, 184). The ground is now said to be gracious and revelatory even in relation to the experience and language of Aristotle. And Thomas is said to have badly distorted the classic philosophers' experience of reason by crystallizing the Stoics' doctrinalization of the philosophic life, and their literalization of philosophical symbols, in his propositional science of "metaphysics."

The implications of Voegelin's new account of classical *noesis* are stated even more explicitly in *The Ecumenic Age* (1974):

There is nothing "natural" in the noetic illumination of consciousness of Plato and Aristotle; both thinkers were clear on the theophanic character of the event. That the insights of the classic philosophers have something to do with "natural reason" as distinguished from "revelation" is

a conceit developed by the Patres when they accepted the Stoic symbols of Nature and Reason uncritically as "philosophy" (*OH IV*, 48; *cf.*, *OH V*, 43*f.* and *Gospel*, 187).

The philosophers' life of reason, Voegelin now claims, "is firmly rooted in a revelation." Philosophic *noesis* occurs when the god "reveals himself as the Nous." In modern accounts of ancient philosophy, the classic experience of the revelatory source of reason, Voegelin protests, "is conventionally anesthetized by carefully reporting the philosophers' 'ideas' without touching the experiences that have motivated them" (*OH IV*, 228, 228*f.*). To correct this unhappy situation, Voegelin argues that the questions imposed by the philosophers' revelatory experiences must be made explicit: "Who is this God who moves the philosophers in their search? What does he reveal to them? And how is he related to the God who revealed himself to Israelites, Jews, and Christians?" To avoid indulging in "extraordinary theological assumptions," Voegelin argues that "the God who appeared to the philosophers, and who elicited from Parmenides the exclamation 'Is!', was the same God who revealed himself to Moses as the 'I am who (or: what) I am,' as the God who is what he is in the concrete theophany to which man responds" (*Ibid.*, 229).

CONCLUSION

I have discussed the substance of Voegelin's changing account of Aristotelian *noesis*, but the important question remains: why did the change come about? Since Voegelin did not write about the change himself, it would be unwise to think that one could offer a conclusive explanation. I will offer, therefore, what I consider the most plausible reason for the change based on textual evidence.

In "The Consciousness of the Ground," in the midst of Voegelin's nearly exclusive focus upon the Aristotelian differentiation of consciousness, Voegelin claims that "Plato had already progressed further" than Parmenides and Aristotle "in the differentiation of the area of erotic tension" (*Anam.*, 167). The "area of erotic tension" refers to "the reality of participation and the reality of its poles" (*Ibid.*). I have already mentioned that Voegelin occasionally uses the term *methexis* to refer to Plato's symbol for "participation." But this is not the equivalent term for symbolizing the entire complex of experiences that Voegelin finds in Aristotle's mutually-participatory tension (*metalepsis*) between divine and human reality. What is the Platonic term equivalent to the Aristotelian metaleptic tension? It is the symbol "*metaxy*," or in-between.⁵⁴ Human existence has the character of the "in-between," Voegelin argues. Plato's *metaxy* "is not

⁵⁴ Dante Germino has published an extensive description of the meaning of *metaxy* as an anthropological principle in Voegelin's thought. See his chapter "Eric Voegelin: The In-Between of Human Life," in *Contemporary Political Philosophers*. eds., Anthony de Crespigny & Kenneth Minogue (London: Methuen & Co., 1975), pp. 100-119.

an empty space between immanent and transcendent objects, but rather the area of mutual participation of divine and human reality" (*Anam.*, 176). It is the in-between character of the human condition that "is symbolized by the Platonic *methexis* and the Aristotelian *metalepsis*."

In his later work, Voegelin finds the experience of mutuality explicitly symbolized in the classic philosophers' accounts of the divine-human encounter. The experience is described "as a search (*zetesis*) from the side of man and attraction (*kinesis*) from the side of God" (*Immortality*, 89, 90). This situation characterizes, for Voegelin, the human condition itself:

Existence has the structure of the In-Between, of the Platonic *metaxy*, and if anything is constant in the history of mankind it is the language of tension between life and death, immortality and mortality, perfection and imperfection, time and timelessness (*EESH*, 119).

If we imaginatively split the poles of the tension and treat them as independent things, Voegelin warns, "we destroy the reality of existence as it has been experienced by the creators of the tensional symbolisms; we lose consciousness and intellect; we deform our humanity and reduce ourselves to a state of quiet despair or activist conformity to the 'age' ...In the language of Heraclitus and Plato: Dream life usurps the place of wake life" (*Ibid.*, 120).

To be sure, Voegelin knew about the tensional nature of existence long before he developed his account of the Platonic *metaxy*. This is clear from his work "On the Theory of Consciousness" (1943) and numerous references to "the tension of existence"

in the early volumes of *Order and History* (e.g., *OH II*, 207, 236f.). But Voegelin's conceptualization of the Platonic *metaxy* marks the beginning of his recognition of mutuality in the divine-human encounter as symbolized by the classic philosophers.

An unpublished manuscript entitled "What is History?" shows that, by 1963, Voegelin no longer thought that Plato was guilty of hypostatizing transcendent being. Voegelin acknowledges the mythic unification of transcendent and immanent reality afforded by Plato's symbolization of participation (*methexis*). In other words, "participation" qualifies the "separate" character of the Platonic forms.⁵⁵ Voegelin's account of the *metaxy* was first given in his essay "Eternal Being in Time" (1964) (*Anam.*, 128ff.; *Anam. Ger.*, 266ff.). The divine and human meet, in Voegelin's account, in the in-between reality of the soul or consciousness. Thus, the conventional account of Plato's bifurcation of reality is no longer possible, given the metaxic status of the *psychē* from which the indices "transcendence" and "immanence" have originated. Had Voegelin acknowledged the in-between mutuality of the Platonic soul in his work of the fifties, he could not have accused Plato of hypostatizing transcendent reality.

Voegelin does not offer any sustained analyses of Plato's *Symposium* or *Philebus* in the nineteen fifties. Yet it is from these texts that he formulates his concept of the *metaxy*. In 1964, the concept is formulated exclusively from the *Symposium*. Voegelin finds that three types of human beings emerge from Plato's account of the

⁵⁵ Cf., *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin, Vol. 28*. Thomas A. Hollweck & Paul Caringella, eds. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990), p. 6.

soul's erotic ascent to the vision of the beautiful: (1) the "mortal" (*thnetos*), who in the language of the epic poets stands opposite to the immortal gods; (2) the "spiritual man" (*diamonios aner*), who "experiences in himself the tension to divine being and thus stands between the human and the divine"; and (3) the "spiritually dull man" (*amathes*), who is not conscious of ignorance (*amathia*) as a pole of the tension between knowledge and ignorance (*Anam.*, 128ff.). The three-fold division indicates three characteristic human types that co-exist in society. It also suggests to Voegelin three particular historical phases: (1) the Homeric-mythic stage where gods and human beings allegedly kept to their own affairs; (2) the Socratic-Platonic differentiation of the daemonic participation of divinity and humanity in the *psychē*; and (3) the sophistic resistance to the philosophers' differentiation of the soul's order. Thus, in Voegelin's account, Plato symbolizes three types of human beings in his own *polis*, and three historical stages: "The past world, the new world, and the resisting environment" (*Anam.*, 154).

In 1964, Voegelin refers to the *Symposium* as the *locus classicus* for the mythical expression of the philosopher's awareness of existing in tension between time and eternity. For Plato, in Voegelin's account, it is still true that "god and man do not mingle" (*Anam.*, 128; *Symposium*, 203a). But without some notion of a mediator, Voegelin argues, "it remains inscrutable how man, in temporal being (Plato's *thnetos*), could experience eternal being" (*Anam.*, 128). And a mediator there must be, for the formation of symbols of divine reality precedes historically the philosophical account of how human beings are aware of divinity. Voegelin relates that Plato attributed the role

of mediator to "‘a very powerful spirit,’ for the realm of the spiritual (*pan to daimonion*) lies between (*metaxy*) God and man" (*Anam.*, 128; *Symposium*, 202e). The mediating spirit between divinity and humanity, Voegelin observes, "is Eros, the symbol of the experienced tension between the poles of temporal and eternal being" (*Anam.*, 128). In the words of Plato, Eros moves between the divine and human beings "[i]nterpreting and transporting human things to the gods and divine things to men; entreaties and sacrifices from below, and ordinances and requitals from above: being midway between, it makes each supplement the other, so that the whole is combined in one" (*Symposium*, 202e).

Voegelin claims that the Platonic account "discreetly points up what is the core of the matter," namely, that man is not simply mortal or temporal, "but experiences in himself the tension to divine being and thus stands between the human and the divine" (*Anam.*, 128). While this is true of the human condition generally, Voegelin adds, only one with "philosophical experience" is conscious of existing in the erotic tension "in which the divine and the human partake of each other" (*Ibid.*, 129, 154). He writes: "[w]hoever has [philosophical] experience grows above the status of a mortal and becomes a ‘spiritual man,’ *daimonios aner*" (*Ibid.*, 128). Such growth is affected through the soul’s loving participation in the tension toward the divine. And the experiences of "mutual encounter and mutual penetration" of divine and human reality are notably those of the classic Greek philosophers. As early as 1964, the classic philosophers are understood by Voegelin as the "spiritual men" whose joy it is to engage

in erotic converse with the divine.

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