

INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

ProQuest Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600

UMI[®]

**ERIC VOEGELIN AND THE SCHELLING RENAISSANCE:
THE SCHELLINGIAN ORIENTATION IN VOEGELIN'S LATER WORKS (1952-1985)**

By

GERALD L. DAY, B.A., M.A.

A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

McMaster University

© Gerald L. Day, September 2000

ERIC VOEGELIN AND THE SCHELLING RENAISSANCE

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (2000)
(Religious Studies)
Ontario**

**McMaster University
Hamilton.**

**TITLE: Eric Voegelin and the Schelling Renaissance:
The Schellingian Orientation in Voegelin's Later Works (1952-1985)**

AUTHOR: Gerald L. Day, B.A. (McGill University), M.A. (McMaster University)

SUPERVISOR: Dr. Zdravko Planinc

**SUPERVISORY
COMMITTEE: Dr. P. Travis Kroeker
Dr. David Clark**

NUMBER OF PAGES: viii, 365.

ABSTRACT

This dissertation compares the philosophy of Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph von Schelling (1775-1854) and Eric Voegelin (1901-1985). More specifically, it discusses the considerable extent to which Voegelin drew upon Schelling in the formulation of his mature philosophy of consciousness and its supporting historiography. There are three parts to the presentation of my argument. First, I consider why Voegelin's published references to Schelling varied greatly throughout the course of his career. Secondly, I consider the earliest of Voegelin's major works, examining the extent to which they draw upon Schelling's. Initially, Voegelin thought of Schelling as a philosopher who managed to transcend the intellectual extremes of his time—idealism and nihilism—, and Voegelin attempted to follow his example. Finally, I discuss how Voegelin distributed aspects of Schelling's post-idealist thought in his own mature works on the philosophy of consciousness and its progressive differentiation in history. I conclude by offering a number of critical reflections on Voegelin's Schellingian view of history as a theogonic process of being itself which tends toward the "immortalizing" transfiguration of humanity.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project began in August 1996, when a visit to the Voegelin Archives at the Hoover Institution (Stanford University) afforded me the chance to read Voegelin's unpublished work on Schelling. This research revealed a number of surprises. Instead of discovering why Voegelin criticizes Schelling in the majority of his published works, I found specific reasons why he once held Schelling in the highest esteem, indeed, why he once considered him to be even greater than Plato as a philosopher of consciousness, politics and history. More specifically, my increasing awareness of the extent to which Voegelin's early praise of Schelling resembles his later praise of other "spiritual realists"—such as Plato, Augustine, William James and Henri Bergson—is what began to give rise to the need for a thorough reinterpretation of Voegelin's mature works, one which explores the extent to which a Schellingian orientation may guide much of his later thought. And so began the dissertation that follows.

Several people deserve to be thanked publicly for their kind support of my work. My doctoral supervisor, Dr. Zdravko Planinc, originally suggested that I take a careful look at Voegelin's unpublished work on Schelling. He then guided my research and writing at every stage of its development. Dr. Barry Cooper responded to an early paper I presented on the subject of my dissertation, at the 1997 Meeting of the American Political Science Association, raised several questions and problems for the interpretation of Schelling and Voegelin, and shared with me part of his own research on Voegelin's use of Schelling. Ron Srigley spent countless hours with me discussing my interpretations of Voegelin's central texts and proved himself to be an invaluable friend at every stage of my work and personal life. Dr. Oona Ajzenstat indicated to me a number of questions and concerns about Voegelin's philosophy of consciousness based on her work on Emmanuel Levinas. Dr. Geoffrey Price provided me with several references to works on Schelling's reception by Continental thinkers in the early twentieth century and challenged my understanding of Christian eschatology within and beyond Voegelin's thought. Dr. Ellis Sandoz gave me several opportunities to present my research to the Eric Voegelin Society at Meetings of the American Political Science Association. Dr. Fred Lawrence kindly took on the responsibilities of an external examiner and provided me with an extensive and thoughtful review of my work. Drs. P.T. Kroeker, D. Clark, P. Widdicombe and H. Stover read my work carefully and questioned my understanding of various matters with the liberality that identifies true gentlemen.

Finally, I wish to dedicate this work to the memory of my father, Gerald Q. Day, and in honor of my mother, Betty N. Day, without whose care and support over the years nothing achieved here would have been possible.

Thank You

ABBREVIATIONS

Works by F. W. J. Schelling

Werke Schelling's *Sämtliche Werke* published by his son, K.F.A. Schelling, in 1856 and the following years. The pagination from this edition is still retained by most other editions and scholarly studies. There are fourteen volumes in this work, divided into two Parts (*Abteilungen*). A typical reference might read I,6: 152, where the respective numbers account for Part, volume: page.

Works by Eric Voegelin

Anam. *Anamnesis*. Edited and translated by Gerhart Niemeyer. Available Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1990.

Anam.^{GER} *Anamnesis: Zur Theorie der Geschichte und Politik*. Munich: R. Piper & Co. Verlag, 1966.

AR *Autobiographical Reflections*. Edited by Ellis Sandoz. Available Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999.

Conversations *Conversations with Eric Voegelin*. Edited by E. O'Connor. Montréal: Thomas More Institute, 1980.

CW *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*. Edited by Paul Caringella, Jürgen Gebhardt, Thomas A. Hollweck, Ellis Sandoz. 34 volumes. A typical reference might read *CW* 25: 222, where the respective numbers indicate volume and page.

"EESH"
FER "Equivalences of Experience and Symbolization in History," *CW* 12: 115-33.
From Enlightenment to Revolution. Edited by John H. Hallowell. Durham: Duke University Press, 1975.

"Immortality"
"Immortality: Experience and Symbol," *CW* 12: 52-94.

"LO"
"Last Orientation," title of the last completed Part of the *History of Political Ideas*, which Voegelin never published during his lifetime; typescript located in the Hoover Institution Archives (Stanford University), Voegelin Papers, Box 59, folder 7: 126-244; now published in *CW* 25: 173-250.

NSP *The New Science of Politics*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952.

OH *Order and History*. Available Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999. A typical reference might read *OH* V: 22, where the respective numbers indicate volume and page.

Vol. I. *Israel and Revelation*, 1956.
Vol. II. *The World of the Polis*, 1957.
Vol. III. *Plato and Aristotle*, 1957.
Vol. IV. *The Ecumenic Age*, 1974.
Vol. V. *In Search of Order*, 1987.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract	iii
Acknowledgements	iv
Abbreviations	v
Table of Contents	vi
 Introduction	 1
I. VOEGELIN'S CHANGING ESTIMATION OF SCHELLING (1933-1985)	19
CHAPTER ONE: VOEGELIN'S PUBLISHED REFERENCES TO SCHELLING	21
1. The Period of Moderate Praise (1933-1947)	22
2. The Struggle for Independence (1951-1981)	28
3. Acknowledging the Importance of Schelling (1981-1985)	52
Conclusion	56
 CHAPTER TWO: VOEGELIN'S UNPUBLISHED ASSESSMENT OF SCHELLING: "LAST ORIENTATION"	 59
1. Disorder and its Recent History: Phenomenalism and the Rise of Modernity	60
Biological Phenomenalism: Evolution	68
Economic Phenomenalism: Liberalism	72
Psychological Phenomenalism: Projection Psychologies	77
The Combination of Types	79
2. Recovering the Substance of Philosophy: "Schellingian Realism"	81
Order: Schelling's Philosophical Anthropology	86
History: The Existential Key to Speculation	106
Politics: Waiting for the End—Together	111
Conclusion	121
 II. THE SCHELLINGIAN ORIENTATION IN VOEGELIN'S LATER WORKS (1952-1985)	 123
 Introduction: The Interpretive Principle of Voegelin's Later Work	 125
 CHAPTER THREE: THE ORDER OF CONSCIOUSNESS: SCHELLING AND VOEGELIN	 135
1. Schelling's Anthropological Critique of Modern Subjectivity	136
2. Identity-Philosophy, Freedom and Politics: The Tensions of Existence	148
3. Voegelin's Later Anthropology: Consciousness and its Ground	154
Conclusion	190
 CHAPTER FOUR: SCHELLING'S HISTORIOGRAPHY	 193
1. "Positive" and "Negative" Aspects of Philosophy	194
2. The Positive <i>Prius</i> in Schelling's Existential Philosophy	201
3. Actualization of the Potencies in Individual Experience	206
Matter (A ¹ , B)	206
Consciousness (A ²) and Self-Conscious Spirit (A ³)	208
4. Actualization of the Potencies in World History	213
Primordial Consciousness (<i>Urbewußtseyn</i>) and The Fall	214
The Epoch of Matter (B): "Relative Monotheism" and "Mythological Religion"	217
The Epoch of Consciousness (A ²): "Simultaneous Polytheism"	218

The Epoch of Self-Conscious Spirit (A³): "Successive Polytheism"	222
a.) Egyptian Mythology	223
b.) Indian Mythology, Buddhism and Chinese Atheism	223
c.) Greek Mythology and the Mystery Religions	229
d.) Greek Philosophy: Plato and Aristotle	236
Jewish Revelation: Law & Prophecy, Beginning of "Revealed Religion"	239
Christian Revelation: Grace & Freedom, Perfection of "Revealed Religion"	243
a.) Christ's Incarnation	244
b.) Christ's Death and Resurrection	246
c.) Christ's Ascension	248
Faith: Teleological and Hypothetical	250
Summary of Schelling's Historiography	252
Conclusion	256
CHAPTER FIVE: VOEGELIN'S HISTORIOGRAPHIES	259
1. The Differentiated Historiography: Developmental History	262
Sacred and Profane Historiographies: Voegelin's Historical Survey	265
Faith and Philosophical Historiography: The Historical Progression of Truth	273
a.) "Cosmological Truth": Mythic Order in the Ancient Near East	276
b.) "Anthropological Truth": Tragedy and Philosophy in Ancient Greece	282
c.) "Soteriological Truth": Salvation History in Jewish and Christian Revelation	285
2. The Anamnestic Transition: Remembering Plato and Aristotle	302
3. The Equivalent Historiography: Developmental History Revisited	317
"History I": Expansion of the Spatial Horizon of Humanity—Profane History	322
"History II": The Horizon Retracted and Mythically Crossed—Sacred History	329
Conclusion	345
CONCLUSION: Voegelin's Participation in the "Schelling-Renaissance"	349
Order	349
History	350
Appendix	355
Bibliography	357

INTRODUCTION

This dissertation examines the extent to which Eric Voegelin drew upon a number of relatively unknown writings by F.W.J. Schelling in the formulation of his mature philosophy of consciousness and its supporting historiography.

Voegelin was an Austrian political philosopher and historian. After the start of a promising career in Vienna, Voegelin and his wife were forced to flee their homeland in mid-July of 1938. Their flight was necessitated by the Nazis' recent occupation of Austria, during the *Anschluss*.¹ A few months later, Voegelin managed to secure a temporary teaching position at Harvard University. This position allowed him and his wife to emigrate to the United States, where they eventually became citizens, in 1944, and retained this citizenship until their deaths.

Voegelin's work began to attract serious attention from American conservatives in the early 1950s. The book that created his initial celebrity was *The New Science of Politics* (1952). It became a best-seller by academic standards and won him the distinction of being chosen as the political philosopher whose work could guide the editorial policies of *Time* magazine. The editors of *Time* were interested in Voegelin because his work provided them, they supposed, with a responsible guide for critical journalism during the cold-war era. They praised Voegelin, distinguishing his thought from the lamentable state of "intellectuality" in the modern West, and specified the central problem in Western civilization as follows: "[T]he idea of an objective, unchanging moral law is hotly denied by many social scientists, defended by other intellectuals and by a lot of non-intellectuals. The resulting confusion, the lack of a common ground, may explain why the man in

¹ Barry Cooper tells the story of the Voegelins' narrow escape from the Gestapo in his recently published book *Eric Voegelin and the Foundations of Modern Political Science*, (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1999), "Escape and Arrival," Chapter 1.

the street today has no poet and the popular lecture hall no philosopher.”² In Voegelin, the editors of *Time* found someone who could offer them a compelling basis for recovering the “common ground” of their disintegrating civilization. More to the point, they found in his work an historical science of myth and poetry which, as their editorial itself demonstrates, could be translated into commonsense terms for the “man in the street.” They also found that Voegelin could elaborate an attractive ethical and theoretical philosophy of order for the lecture hall, one which made great strides in transcending the *modus operandi* of contemporary social science. The issue that troubled the editors of *Time* was what many people, liberal and conservative alike, continue to proclaim as the only basis for a proper understanding of socio-political order: the methodic separation of public “facts” and private “values.” Voegelin was publicly dissatisfied with the fact/value distinction. He found it to be unscientific, philosophically untenable, and no secure basis for civil liberty.

The central problem with the type of “social scientific” thinking that rests on the fact/value distinction is commonly known, though perhaps too little discussed. It manifests itself clearly in the attempt to make all truth claims and all moral claims relative to the individuals who make them. Those who embrace the fact/value distinction, and the relativism upon which it is based, undermine their own appeals to the truth of facts or values, precisely in attempting to support this distinction as a valid foundation for socio-political science—for the fact/value distinction itself must be based on “values” which are relative only to the people of a particular society and historical period.³ Accordingly, the fact/value distinction can secure little by way of personal or political liberty. At most, it may confuse and thereby pacify some people who might otherwise be prone to engage in

² See the review article on Voegelin’s *New Science of Politics*, entitled “Journalism and Joachim’s Children,” *Time*, March 9 (1953): 57-61.

³ Voegelin himself did not dwell on the well-known problems of relativism. His most sustained discussion of this theme is found in his critique of positivism and discussion of Max Weber’s unsuccessful struggle to make the fact/value distinction scientifically respectable: *NSP*, 1-26.

dangerous types of political illiberality—terrorism and the like—, undermining their intellectual bases for action in the world. But the confusion that pacifies some is also what fails to prevent others from thriving in the same destruction of a society’s “common ground,” as indicated by the editors of *Time*. Thus, it remains far from clear to value-laded social scientists how the relative “values” of some could ever be understood as virtues relevant to all.

Voegelin’s early American works explicitly attempted to regain a philosophically defensible sense of the lost “common ground” in Western political societies. Instead of speaking in the language of “facts and values,” “conservatives and liberals,” “worldviews,” “belief systems,” “perspectives” and the like, a language that Voegelin considered to be part of modernity’s self-understanding, he attempted to reformulate a classical understanding of human life from its trans-cultural origins. For Voegelin, “the incredible spectaculum of modernity” was:

fascinating and nauseating, grandiose and vulgar, exhilarating and depressing, tragic and grotesque—with its apocalyptic enthusiasm for building new worlds that were new yesterday; with its destructive wars and revolutions spaced by temporary stabilizations on ever lower levels of spiritual and intellectual order through natural law, enlightened self-interest, a balance of powers, a balance of profits, the survival of the fittest, and the fear of atomic annihilation in a fit of fitness; with its ideological dogmas piled on top of the ecclesiastic and sectarian ones and its resistant skepticism that throws them all equally on the garbage heap of opinion; with its great systems built on untenable premises and its shrewd suspicions that the premises are indeed untenable and therefore must never be rationally discussed; with the result, in our time, of having unified mankind into a global madhouse bursting with stupendous vitality.⁴

This turn to a classical or pre-modern understanding of politics and history in an effort to transcend the sociological relativity of his time did not make him a “conservative,” however. Voegelin would argue that all classical elements in his thought are based on philosophically defensible grounds—points at which a given tradition has correctly articulated and retained some notion of cardinal human experiences of order, the central meaning of which transcends culture *per se*. Nonetheless, American conservatives were first to celebrate Voegelin’s early writings.

⁴ Voegelin, “Immortality: Experience and Symbol.” *CW* 12: 55.

After an initial celebration of his work, popular interest in Voegelin changed as his work appeared to change disciplines. He became better known as a philosophical historian. His great work, *Order and History*, began to be published, the first three volumes appearing in 1956 to 1957. It was possible for Voegelin to publish these volumes within one year of each other, the bulk of what would eventually be a five-volume work, because they were based on more than a decade of unpublished writing: a four-thousand page typescript on the *History of Political Ideas*, a project that Voegelin had decided to shelve by the early 1950s.

Voegelin began writing this *History* in 1939, only one year after his emigration. One of the central motivations of this work was an attempt to understand how the "common ground" of Western political and religious civilization had been lost and how, if possible, it could be recovered. In his *Autobiographical Reflections* (1973), Voegelin says that his early *History* "started from the conventional assumptions that there are ideas, that they have a history, and that a history of political ideas would have to work its way from Classical politics up to the present. Under these assumptions, [he] humbly worked through the sources, and eventually a manuscript of several thousand pages was in existence."⁵ The size of the manuscript presented a problem. Voegelin initially undertook this project as a textbook of moderate size (200-250 pages) for McGraw-Hill. He began by taking works such as George H. Sabine's *History of Political Theory* (1937) as a model for such a project, determining what should be included or excluded in his own work. But such standard textbooks proved to be inadequate guides. In the last of other departures from the norm, Voegelin's *History* included a chapter on a thinker unlikely to be studied in any work on political philosophy and its history, namely, F. W. J. Schelling.

⁵ Voegelin, *AR*, 78.

The decision to include a chapter on Schelling in the last Part of the study that Voegelin would ever complete proved fatal for the entire project as initially conceived. Voegelin writes: “While working on the chapter on Schelling, it dawned on me that the conception of a history of ideas was an ideological deformation of reality. There were no ideas [in history] unless there were symbols of immediate *experiences*.”⁶ In a later autobiographical comment, made in 1983, Voegelin specifies that it was one of Schelling’s last works, his *Philosophy of Mythology*, that produced the decisive change in his understanding of the initial project: “when I studied the philosophy of the myth, I understood that ideas are nonsense: there are no ideas as such and there is no history of ideas; but there is a history of experiences which can express themselves in various forms, as myths of various types, as philosophical development, theological development, and so on.” Voegelin realized that he was still too much of a conventional social scientist. He had been interpreting “ideas” as abstractions, perhaps even as arbitrary constructions, without taking into consideration the concrete experiences that motivated their expression in language symbols throughout history. He says that this realization brought a “crash” to the *History* project: “I cashiered that history of ideas, which was practically finished in four or five volumes, and started reworking it from the standpoint of the problem of the experiences. That is how *Order and History* started.”⁷

An important point has begun to emerge from these remarks: the reworking of Voegelin’s history of ideas into his magnum opus, *Order and History*, began with his studies of Schelling in the early 1940s. Schelling appears to have helped Voegelin’s thinking to become more concrete. But this point is itself cause for wonder, since it is common for Schelling to be interpreted as a German

⁶ *Ibid.*, 62, 63 (emphasis in text). Note: throughout this entire dissertation I do not add typographical emphases to quoted texts. All emphases belong to their authors.

⁷ Voegelin, “Autobiographical Statement At Age Eighty-Two,” in *The Beginning and the Beyond: Papers from the Gadamer and Voegelin Conferences*, Supplementary Issue of *Lonergan Workshop*, Vol. 4, Fred Lawrence, ed., (Boston: Boston College, 1984), 119.

idealist, hardly a concrete or realistic thinker.

Schelling is best known as one of the founders, along with G.W.F. Hegel (1770-1831), of a movement in German philosophy known as absolute idealism. Schelling eventually broke with the "Hegelian" philosophy he helped to found, but not in any writings published during his lifetime. The publication of these works was hampered by an unfortunate event. In 1811, F. H. Jacobi was perhaps the most notable of several philosophers who brought a charge of pantheism against Schelling. Their criticisms forced Schelling to defend his previous works.⁸ But the experience seems to have been the major reason for his decision to abandon publishing. He confined his publications, thereafter, to a few minor articles. Despite appearances, he continued to write prolifically, but his important break with idealism became known only to a few of his students in a series of public lectures shortly after the death of Hegel. To complicate matters further, these important lectures were poorly received and perhaps even misunderstood. They were quickly discounted as a confused mixture of the idealism for which Schelling had become famous and the Christian dogmatism into which the allegedly resentful rival to Hegel's greater fame had fallen. At the time of his return to public lecturing, Schelling's Hegelian students wanted another Hegel, which they did not get. And some of his Christian students wanted an anti-Hegelian apology for the faith, which they did not get.⁹ Instead of trying to please the majority of his students, Schelling attempted to remain true to his central concern: to articulate a defensibly philosophical science of nature and

⁸ Schelling could draw attention to one text in particular, where the charge was anticipated and (to his mind) refuted. See his *Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit* (1809), *Werke* I,7: 338-50. Schelling also addressed this problem in an earlier work, which was published only posthumously. See his *System der gesamten Philosophie und der Naturphilosophie insbesondere* (1804), *Werke* I,6: 177f.

⁹ Schelling began lecturing to 800 students and finished the year with only 29. See Jean-François Marquet's Introduction to his French translation of Schelling's *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, as *Philosophie de la Révélation, Livre Premier: Introduction à la Philosophie de la Révélation*, Jean-François Marquet and Jean-François Courtine, trans., (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1989), 7.

the history of its spirit (*Geist*). He neither embraced completely nor criticized completely the Christian tradition from which his thought had developed, and his attempt to steer a middle course disappointed nearly everyone. Consequently, he died relatively unknown and dejected.¹⁰

Schelling was too late, and perhaps insufficiently clear, to be successful in his attempt to regain the warm reception he once received as a public lecturer. Scholarly opinions were fixed. His reputation as an idealist had already been firmly established on the basis of his earlier publications. And so he continues generally to be known to this day, namely, as a transitional figure between the ahistorical idealism of J. G. Fichte and Hegel's more celebrated attempts to make philosophy an essentially historical science.¹¹ This account of Schelling's position in the history of philosophy began to change only in the early decades of the twentieth century, as the voluminous works of his post-Hegelian philosophy began to be published and studied by subsequent generations after his death. A more comprehensive understanding of Schelling's late thought (*Spätphilosophie*) has begun to emerge, but more work remains to be done.¹² One indication that Schelling has been relatively neglected by English-speaking scholars is seen in the fact that the most substantial parts of his late work, his voluminous *Philosophy of Mythology* and *Philosophy of Revelation*, have yet to be translated into English.

¹⁰ These comments follow a standard account of Schelling's reputation. See Emil L. Fackenheim, *The God Within: Kant, Schelling, and Historicity*, John Burbidge, ed., (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 50-3, 92-3.

¹¹ Cf. Victor C. Hayes, "Schelling: Persistent Legends, Improving Image," in *The Southwestern Journal of Philosophy* 3 (1972): 63-73.

¹² Schelling scholars have not been able to reach a consensus on when his "later" philosophy begins. This situation has been caused by difficulties pertaining to the assignment of periods to his thought. Some think, as Hegel once said, that Schelling published his drafts, thus creating a situation in which each new book marks a new period in his ephemeral thought. Schelling has often been dismissed as a philosophical proteus on account of this quip. Others see substantial lines of continuity in all of Schelling's thought. They replace strict periodizations with accounts of the development of earlier notions in his later works (Cf. Fackenheim, Beach, and Bowie). Since Voegelin would have agreed more with the latter group, I shall use the term *Spätphilosophie* to indicate Schelling's posthumously published writings. This division works best for the purposes of this study, for these are the works in which Schelling develops his critique of Hegel and the positive philosophy of history so important to Voegelin.

While most knew of Schelling only from his idealistic writings prior to 1809, Voegelin was one of few American scholars who was able to draw upon his complete works and find in Schelling one of the most philosophically compelling “spiritual realists” who had ever lived. Indeed, in the concluding chapter of his *History*, Voegelin praises Schelling as “one of the greatest philosophers of all times.” He credits Schelling with developing “perhaps the profoundest piece of philosophical thought ever elaborated,” and thereby with establishing “a new level of consciousness in Western intellectual history in general and in the history of political thought in particular.”¹³ This is the highest praise Voegelin ever bestows upon anyone in any of his writings. But it remains relatively unknown, because it was not published during his lifetime.

Voegelin’s chapter on Schelling is found in the last Part of his abandoned *History*. The Part in question bears the title, “Last Orientation;” and the chapter bearing the title “Schelling” forms its centerpiece. To Voegelin, Schelling was—like Plato, Augustine and Thomas Aquinas—a thinker who articulated a final point of orientation as his civilization entered a crisis of spiritual and political meaning. The crisis of modernity was clearly evident in the events of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. But following these events, Voegelin also found evidence of a renaissance of classical philosophy through the works of Schelling. In the mid-1940s, Voegelin saw a number of distinctively Schellingian elements in the thought of several, relatively contemporaneous men; and this led him to characterize the early decades of the twentieth century as a “Schelling-Renaissance.”¹⁴

To be sure, one may never have heard of such a renaissance. This is due, in part, to the conventional association of Schelling with some form of “existentialism,” whether of a Kierkegaardian or Heideggerian stripe. But the Schelling of Voegelin’s “Last Orientation” is a

¹³ Voegelin, “LO,” *CW* 25: 198, 208, 236.

¹⁴ Voegelin borrows this phrase from Frederick de Wolfe Bolman Jr.’s “Introduction” to his translation of Schelling’s *Ages of the World*. Cf., Voegelin, “LO,” *CW* 25: 199 n. 2.

“spiritual realist,” not an existentialist. Voegelin describes the early decades of the twentieth century as being characterized by an “undercurrent influence” of Schellingian “realism,” arising in opposition to the “spiritually decadent” forces of “economic materialism, Darwinism, liberal economic theory, neo-Kantian epistemology, historicism, empirical sociology and psychology”—in short, the dominant social and intellectual movements that defined the social-scientific age. Voegelin criticizes these movements as decadent because of their characteristically modern attempt to replace philosophical inquiry into the meaning and substance of reality with biological, economic, and psychological analyses of the phenomenal aspects of reality alone. For Voegelin, the decadence of modernity is best evident in its “phenomenalism.” He writes:

Parochialization of thought according to communities and fragmentization of thought according to partial perspectives of contemporary interest, with the concomitant inevitable decay of philosophical technique, are the great mass trends of the eighteenth century and after. We enter a period of confusion in which anybody can easily be right because almost everybody else is wrong to the extent that it is sufficient to stress the opposite of what somebody else says in order to be at least as partially right as the opponent.¹⁵

This statement is an excellent summary of Voegelin’s frustration with the poor state of theoretical science at the time. However, it does not reveal the extent to which Schelling’s works helped him to understand the precise nature of the crisis and pointed the way to its possible solution.

Voegelin found Schelling to have been extraordinarily successful in his personal attempts to rise above the din of parochial confusions and to bring philosophy back to its principle task: the exploration of the substance of reality, within and beyond its phenomena, as this becomes manifest in the symbolic history of human experiences of order. At the same time, however, Voegelin also knew that Schelling failed to become socially effective in his regenerative efforts. Schelling suffered, Voegelin says, from the common plight of a philosophical realist in an age of cultural and intellectual crisis. He describes Schelling’s struggle as follows:

¹⁵ Voegelin, “LO,” *CW* 25: 197.

the realist finds himself in an intellectual and social environment that is no longer receptive to the rational, technically competent thought of a spiritually well-ordered personality. In the disorder of irrationalisms pitted against each other, he will frequently find the continuity of problems broken. Questions that have long been settled will be resumed as if nobody had treated them before. Elementary philosophical mistakes can be advanced with success and dominate a public scene that has lost the rational standards of critique.

Despite the clear signs of decadence in modern society, however, Voegelin remains confident that such spiritual decay has its limits: "a philosopher of the stature of Schelling can be relegated from the public scene when the movements occupying it are spiritually decadent, but he cannot be prevented from exerting an undercurrent influence that will swell in importance with time. The very tension between the realist and his age which precludes an immediate effectiveness will be dissolved in a delayed effect when the spiritually blind forces have run their course into helpless confusion."¹⁶

Voegelin claims to find Schelling's "undercurrent influence" in the works of Schopenhauer and Kierkegaard, Eduard von Hartmann and Lotze, Bergson and Tillich, Jaspers and Heidegger, Ortega y Gasset and Berdyaev. But he also finds that many of these thinkers based their own accounts of reality on no more than individual parts of the total complex of experiences expressed in Schelling's thought. Consequently, the extraordinary quality of Schelling's singular effort became lost in a dispersion, and the various aspects of his analyses of many issues became *disjecta membra*, scattered throughout the writings of the better-known names of several generations:

the experiences of the will and the nirvanah in Schopenhauer; the craving for the inner return in Kierkegaard; the psychology of the unconscious in Freud; the experiences of Dionysos and of immanent grace in Nietzsche; the social critique of the age and the longing for the Third Realm in the mass-movements of Communism and National-Socialism; the ominous orgiastic experiences with their anxiety in Nietzsche, in Freud, and in the orgasms of destruction and self-destruction of the General Wars. This scattering of the elements is the signature of the crisis, as their balance was the signature of Schelling's greatness.¹⁷

Voegelin acknowledges only the beginning of a "Schelling-Renaissance" at the turn of the century

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 198, 199.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 241.

and its early decades. The greatness of Schelling had started to become a regenerative force in the philosophical exploration of substance, beyond the “phenomenalisms” of the day, but a philosopher equal to Schelling’s comprehensive vision had yet to arise.

I shall argue that the general character and orientation of Voegelin’s life-work is best understood as an attempt to become *the* philosopher of the “Schelling-Renaissance.” Voegelin sought to reunite the *disjecta membra* of Schelling’s thought in a properly “tensional” balance by developing a comprehensive philosophy of consciousness, symbolization and its history. More specifically, after writing his early “Schelling” chapter, he began to recast his work in Schellingian form by taking materials from his abandoned *History of Political Ideas* and representing them under the rubrics by which his great work is named: “order” and “history.” These are the twin pillars of a characteristically Schellingian understanding of philosophy, specifically in its “negative” (rational) philosophy of order and its “positive” philosophy of historical existence.

Voegelin’s attempt to develop the scattered elements of Schelling’s thought in his own philosophy of consciousness and history is still far from obvious to Voegelin’s best-known interpreters, despite the evidence of Schellingian elements throughout his writings. This is for two reasons. First, as previously mentioned, Schelling’s later works are still relatively unknown to the English-speaking scholars to whom Voegelin’s major studies are most immediately accessible. Second, and more importantly, most of Voegelin’s published references to Schelling are deprecatory. Schelling is criticized more than he is praised in almost all of Voegelin’s publications. Accordingly, one is not likely to suspect that Voegelin ever learned anything transformative from Schelling. On the basis of the published comments alone, it would seem that Voegelin found Schelling to have been little more than an Hegelian idealist, an assessment much in keeping with conventional accounts of his place in the history of modern philosophy as the connecting link between the idealistic systems of Fichte and Hegel.

In light of this situation, one might justifiably wonder why a study of Voegelin's indebtedness to Schelling is needed at all. There seems to be an obvious solution to the question of the relationship. At most, it might be argued, Voegelin appears to have had some interest in Schelling's philosophy during the earliest part of his career, but he never published the fruits of this interest—his "Last Orientation" chapter on Schelling—and was openly critical of Schelling in the vast majority of his publications, all of which indicates that Voegelin simply changed his mind about Schelling and turned in a new direction of his own. This argument would be warranted, if it were not for a few decisive facts. First, near the end of his life, in his autobiographical reflections, Voegelin himself provided his interpreters with the means to assess Schelling's formative importance to his own thought. Second, Voegelin never destroyed his early work on Schelling but considered publishing it, also near the end of his life, as part of the last volume of *Order and History*.¹⁸ Finally, and surprisingly, Voegelin's late autobiographical reflections agree substantially with his early assessment of Schelling's greatness. This situation prompts me to question what of Schelling's thought may have continued to play a significant role in the formation of Voegelin's mature philosophy of consciousness and history, even in the works where he is explicitly critical of Schelling. This question has not been sufficiently examined by scholars. To be sure, most books on Voegelin have at least one reference to Schelling in their indices. But the reference is, typically, a reproduction without further discussion of one of the autobiographical comments where an elderly Voegelin recalls his early encounter with Schelling.

There are, however, a few notable exceptions in the scholarship. Voegelin's "Last Orientation" chapter on Schelling has been known to scholars for several decades, and some have

¹⁸ In 1969 and 1971 Voegelin sent two letters to his publisher concerning the contents proposed for *In Search of Order*, the last volume of *Order and History* (Cf., *CW* 28: 239-43). The "Schelling" chapter is planned for publication in both letters. The editors of volume 28 of the *Collected Works* confirm that the proposed chapter was the same one from the *History of Political Ideas* (*Ibid.*, xxiv, n. 11).

begun to address the question of Voegelin's indebtedness to Schelling. Jürgen Gebhardt, an editor of Voegelin's *Collected Works*, was perhaps the first to publish quotes from Voegelin's "Last Orientation." He did so in two articles from the early 1980s: one examining Voegelin's notion of "spiritual realism," and the other his own account of how the symbol of "universal humanity" develops throughout history.¹⁹ However, Gebhardt is not primarily concerned with the relationship between Voegelin and Schelling's thought in either of these articles, perhaps because he reads the "spiritual realist" discussed in the "Last Orientation" as a reference to Voegelin himself, rather than as Voegelin's reference to Schelling. Not surprisingly, neither article has any detailed analysis of how Voegelin's early work on Schelling may have continued in his later, explicitly critical works. In the final analysis, Gebhardt appears to think that Schelling had little to do with the development of Voegelin's life-work.

The "Last Orientation" has recently been published as volume 25 of Voegelin's posthumous *Collected Works*. Gebhardt is the volume's editor: but his "Introduction" says nothing substantively new about the issue. Gebhardt acknowledges that "Schelling had figured prominently throughout Voegelin's early work [of the 1930s]. In the unpublished 'Herrschaftslehre' and in *Race and State* Voegelin refers to Schelling as an intellectual authority. In particular [Voegelin's] analysis of the myth-making function of the political idea had drawn on Schelling's theory of myths. Thus, the ['Last Orientation'] chapter on Schelling presents a reinterpretation and is linked immediately with the incipient work on a theory of consciousness."²⁰ There will be occasion to draw upon the truth of these points in subsequent discussions. For now, it need only be noted that Gebhardt does not

¹⁹ See Jürgen Gebhardt, "Erfahrung und Wirklichkeit—Amerkungen zur Politischen Wissenschaft des spirituellen Realismus," in *The Philosophy of Order*, Peter J. Opitz and Gregor Sebba, eds., (Stuttgart: Ernst Klett, 1981), 332-44; and "Towards the Process of Universal Mankind: The Formation of Voegelin's Philosophy of History," in *Eric Voegelin's Thought: A Critical Appraisal*, Ellis Sandoz, ed., (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1982), 67-86.

²⁰ Gebhardt, "Editor's Introduction," *CW* 25: 29.

attempt to follow up this suggested “link” between Voegelin’s studies of Schelling and the development of his philosophy of consciousness. Instead, he drops all discussion of Schelling in favor of Max Scheler as the most important guide to Voegelin’s understanding of philosophical anthropology.²¹ Gebhardt’s turn to Scheler is occasioned by his acceptance of Voegelin’s later, critical remarks against Schelling.²² Consequently, Gebhardt’s work leaves the central question of my study essentially unexamined.

Paul Gottfried has also discussed the matter briefly. Gottfried read Gebhardt’s work from the early 1980s and developed from it a brief discussion of the extent to which Voegelin’s thought may be in general agreement with Schelling’s.²³ Gottfried’s account relies heavily upon a few salutary references to Schelling’s process theology in Voegelin’s early essay, “On the Theory of Consciousness” (1943), and on the publication of several quotes from the “Last Orientation” in Gebhardt’s articles. Gottfried also refers occasionally to *Order and History* IV (1974), ostensibly to reveal Voegelin’s—at times Schellingian, at others Hegelian—understanding of order and truth in the developing process of world history. Unfortunately, Gottfried leaves his reader somewhat confused with respect to Voegelin’s actual conception of truth in history. On the one hand, he writes: “In exploring the history of consciousness, Voegelin applies a Schellingian, and even

²¹ The discussion of Scheler’s importance to Voegelin’s thinking is at present speculative, since Voegelin had less to say about him than about Schelling. William Petropulos has begun to address the issue in “Eric Voegelin and German Sociology,” *Manchester Sociology Occasional Papers*, Peter Halfpenny, ed., 50 (February, 1998): 1-21; and “Social Science and Salvation: Notes on one branch of German Sociology.” Paper presented at the Annual Meeting, American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., September 1, 2000.

²² Gebhardt refers his readers to one place where the later Voegelin dismisses Schelling as a “gnostic” intellectual, namely, as someone who confuses humanity with divinity (*OH* IV: 21). But then he jumps to the conclusion that “Voegelin never again referred to Schelling with such enthusiasm as in this [‘Last Orientation’] presentation of his philosophy, because his evocation of a divine image in which blend the features of Dionysus and Christ fell under the verdict of modern Gnosticism” (*CW* 25: 31). As the rest of this dissertation attempts to prove, this statement is a premature closure of what turns out to be a complex matter.

²³ See Paul Edward Gottfried, *The Search for Historical Meaning: Hegel and the Postwar American Right*, (Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1986). Gottfried does not appear to have read Voegelin’s “Last Orientation” work on Schelling.

Hegelian, criterion of progress. He undertakes to classify the experiences of [divine] transcendence in terms of the growing openness to being. . . . Thus Voegelin, while interpreting Christian revelation as being one of many ‘symbolic’ expressions of religious encounter, asserts that St. Paul’s ‘experience of the God of the beyond’ was a fuller one than that of Isaiah and Plato.” Although the relationship in Voegelin’s later thought between St. Paul’s “pneumatic” and Plato’s “noetic” experiences of revelation is more complex than Gottfried suggests, there are aspects of Voegelin’s mature philosophy of history that seem to be developmental or providentially historicist, and thus perhaps Schellingian or Hegelian. On the other hand, Gottfried claims that Voegelin’s conception of “the possibility, and even probability, of backsliding from a higher to a lower level of religious consciousness within the same civilization, [makes Voegelin’s] view of cumulative spiritual advance. . . less mechanistic than Hegel’s.”²⁴ Ultimately, Gottfried does not decide the issue of whether Voegelin’s thought was more consistent with the mature thought of Hegel or the later Schelling. This confusion may stem from ambiguities in Voegelin’s changing assessments of Schelling, or it may be rooted in Gottfried’s own failure to address the complexity of Voegelin’s historiography.

Despite this difficulty, Gottfried does manage to suggest, albeit without supporting textual evidence, several points of agreement between Voegelin and Schelling: (1) both men, as “philosopher-mystics,” deplored the divorce between theology and philosophy; (2) both criticized rationalists “who tried to imprison the divine substance within all-encompassing systems,” *i.e.*, both were critical of idealism; (3) their philosophical explorations of the history of consciousness were comprised in large part of attempts to understand the truth of religious mythology; and (4) both sought a middle position between Kant and Hegel with regard to how the divine ground of being can

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 100, 154 n. 62.

be understood as “present and operative in consciousness.”²⁵

The manner in which Gottfried suggests these points of agreement results in an unconvincing estimation of Schelling’s importance to Voegelin. Gottfried states his claims without mentioning any of Voegelin’s critical remarks against Schelling—by far the majority of his published references. This is a remarkable oversight. As a result, Gottfried leaves his readers with the strong impression that Voegelin’s use of Schelling, characterized ostensibly by “a spirit of indulgence born of admiration,” resulted in something akin to the famous case of Samuel Taylor Coleridge’s plagiarism of Schelling.²⁶ It is relatively easy for Gottfried to give his readers this impression, because he neglects to comment on Voegelin’s published attestations to Schelling’s role in guiding his own thought.²⁷ Finally, and least persuasively, Gottfried’s readers are led to assume that Voegelin’s narrow miss with plagiarism occurred unconsciously, that Voegelin “may have been to Tübingen,” the first intellectual home of Hegel and Schelling, “without even knowing it.”²⁸ Such a conclusion cannot be supported by a complete analysis of the textual evidence, as I shall argue, even though some of Gottfried’s less extreme suggestions have helped to clarify the general character of Voegelin’s use of Schelling.

Barry Cooper has recently provided the most complete discussion of the Voegelin-Schelling question to date. His book, *Eric Voegelin and the Foundations of Modern Political Science*, concludes with a chapter devoted to Voegelin’s interpretation of Schelling in the “Last Orientation.”

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 96-7.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 98. For an account of Coleridge’s plagiarism see the “Appendix” in Thomas Pfau, *Idealism and the Endgame of Theory* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 271-8.

²⁷ For example, in Voegelin’s works on “Plato’s Egyptian Myth” (1947), *Anamnesis* (1966), and relevant autobiographical statements available at the time of Gottfried’s publication: in (1) Ellis Sandoz, *The Voegelinian Revolution*; and (2) Voegelin’s “Autobiographical Statement At Age Eighty-Two.” Sandoz’s book appears in Gottfried’s bibliography, but he neglects to comment on the significance of the autobiographical remarks on Schelling, namely, that Voegelin himself led his interpreters in this direction of thought.

²⁸ Gottfried, *op. cit.*, 103.

Cooper says that Voegelin was arguably “the most important political scientist of the [twentieth] century.” More importantly, he also acknowledges that Voegelin “built his political science on the foundation Schelling had left.”²⁹ Cooper makes a convincing case that Voegelin’s mature work is also indebted to Giordano Bruno and Giambattista Vico, but he begins to argue for the distinctive importance of Schelling. Nevertheless, his study is incomplete in one important respect: it focuses on how Voegelin understood Schelling in the 1940s and consequently does not discuss the question of how this legacy may have endured or been transformed in Voegelin’s later works. Much of Cooper’s chapter on Schelling is devoted to an analysis of Emil Fackenheim’s reading of Schelling’s philosophy and a comparison of this with Voegelin’s own reading at the time. Cooper’s work on Schelling is necessarily limited, given the nature of his project: an intellectual biography of Voegelin up to the publication of *The New Science of Politics* (1952). It will serve as an excellent basis for my own discussion of the Schellingian orientation in Voegelin’s later works.

There are two Parts to my study of Voegelin’s reading of Schelling. Part One examines Voegelin’s published and unpublished estimations of Schelling, each in separate chapters. This discussion covers nearly fifty years of Voegelin’s life. Chapter 1 examines the changes in Voegelin’s published references to Schelling. Chapter 2 interprets his unpublished “Last Orientation” in its historical context and isolates several features that he found to be distinctive marks of Schelling’s philosophy. The analysis in Part One concludes by suggesting that a thorough reinterpretation of Voegelin’s mature thought needs to be undertaken in light of the Schellingian principles that he found to be most attractive. Part Two takes up this analysis, beginning with an account of the Schellingian principle that underlies all of Voegelin’s later thought. Chapter 3

²⁹ Barry Cooper, *Eric Voegelin and the Foundations of Modern Political Science*, *op. cit.*, xi, 432.

examines the extent to which Voegelin's philosophy of consciousness draws upon Schelling's philosophy of absolute identity. Chapter 4 is devoted exclusively to an account of Schelling's latest historiography. And Chapter 5 assesses the extent to which Voegelin's historical thinking draws upon Schelling's. My conclusion summarizes key points in the Schellingian orientation of Voegelin's later work, the aspects of his mature thought that make *him* one of the most important philosophers, if not *the* philosopher of what has come to be known as the "Schelling-Renaissance."

I.

VOEGELIN'S CHANGING ESTIMATION OF SCHELLING (1933-1985)

CHAPTER ONE

VOEGELIN'S PUBLISHED REFERENCES TO SCHELLING

Voegelin publishes considerable praise for Schelling's thought at the beginning of his career and in the last four years of his life. But he criticizes it severely in the intervening decades, a period yielding the majority of his published references. In these years, from 1951 to 1981, Voegelin often criticizes Schelling's thought for its "gnosticism," usually by appealing to its Hegelian character. In Voegelin's use of the term, "gnostic" thinkers either claim to have achieved, or assume that it is possible to achieve complete knowledge of the intractable mysteries of life, death, and the meaning of world history. Gnostics claim to possess, or claim to have the method for eventually possessing the saving knowledge that results from the eradication of these mysteries—the knowledge that others have attributed to God alone. More specifically, gnostics attempt to replace knowledge based on religious faith or philosophical hypothesis with knowledge based on certainty; and often, the overcoming of faith is announced as an apotheosis.¹ Since Voegelin always maintains that divine knowledge cannot be attained by human beings, one would not be led to suspect that Schelling, if he were a gnostic, could ever have provided any significant guidance for Voegelin's own understanding of philosophy, the nature of human consciousness and the broader sense of order this manifests in world history. Voegelin's published criticisms of Schelling's gnosticism are perhaps most responsible for the fact that his later use of many Schellingian themes has remained undetected.

Voegelin's published praise of Schelling at the beginning and end of his career allows three periods to be distinguished in the history of this relationship: (1) the period of moderate praise and

¹ Voegelin's most sustained discussions of modern gnosticism are to be found in *The New Science of Politics* (1952), *Science, Politics and Gnosticism* (1968), and *From Enlightenment to Revolution* (1975). Hegel, Comte, Saint-Simon, Marx and Nietzsche are the most common targets for Voegelin's critique of gnosticism.

acknowledged dependency, from 1933 to 1947; (2) the period of general criticism, from 1951 to 1981; and (3) the last years of his life, from 1981-1985, when Voegelin offers high praise of Schelling in public and private conversations, while repeating his critique of Schelling in published writings. This chapter examines Voegelin's published references to Schelling from each of these periods and questions the nature of the apparent change in his understanding of Schelling's significance in the history of philosophy.

1. THE PERIOD OF MODERATE PRAISE (1933-1947)

Voegelin first encountered the works of Schelling in graduate school, at the University of Vienna (1919-1922), while working under the supervision of Othmar Spann.² Spann held Schelling's thought in high esteem. In several of his works from the early 1920s, Spann draws on Schelling—along with Augustine, Thomas Aquinas, and Meister Eckhart—in developing an account of the “inner” unity, or “religiousness,” requisite for understanding the philosophical history of all religions. Several decades later, Spann published a work on the philosophy of religion, inspired by Schelling's *Philosophy of Mythology* and *Philosophy of Revelation*, which Manfred Schröter, the editor of one collection of Schelling's *Works*, considered to be the fulfillment of Schelling's entire program.³

Race and State

There are no references to Schelling, nor any clear indication of his signature guidance, in Voegelin's first book, *On the Form of the American Mind* (1928). Voegelin begins to discuss

² Cf., Voegelin, *AR*, 1-4. Also see Barry Cooper's Introduction to Voegelin's *Political Religions*, T.J. DiNapoli and E.S. Easterly III, trans., (Lewiston, N.Y.: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1986), vi.

³ Cf., Othmar Spann, *Religionsphilosophie auf geschichtlicher Grundlage* (Wien: Gallus-Verlag, 1947). For a list of other works by Spann and Schröter's assessment of the religion-philosophy, see William Petropulos, “Eric Voegelin and German Sociology,” in *Manchester Sociology Occasional Papers*, Peter Halfpenny, ed., 50 (February, 1998), 3, and notes 9-14.

Schelling only in his 1933 book, *Race and State*. In the context of an attempt to reach a critical understanding of the emergence of race consciousness in "particularist communities," Voegelin says that "Schelling's doctrine of myth as the ground of being of all peoples or nations seems to us the first profound insight into the religious nature, in the broadest sense, of all community formation." Schelling argues that a people does not create its mythology. Rather, the reverse is true: a people emerges when a common, inner movement of the spirit creates the basis for a shared mythology. This mythology, in turn, is what yields the consciousness that a particular people has come to stand apart from humanity, presupposed as an original unity. "A people's or nation's ground of being [*Seinsgrund*] and its unity is its myth. Simply living together in an area does not unite individuals into a people; nor do they become a people by virtue of their shared pursuit of agriculture and trade or by a common legal order. What makes a people and sets it apart is 'community of consciousness,' 'a common world perspective,' a shared 'mythology.' A people or nation is not given its mythology in the course of history; instead, its mythology determines its history. In fact, for Schelling, . . . mythology *is* history itself." ⁴

The impulse that eventually creates a people or nation "does not come from outside." It is a common movement in the consciousness of individuals who eventually declare themselves to be a distinct people. Thus, Voegelin also credits Schelling with making "the first contribution to the psychology of particularist communities separating themselves from humanity. [Schelling] speaks of the barb of internal unrest, the feeling of being no longer all of mankind but only a part of it, of no longer belonging to the absolute One but to have fallen prey to a particular god." As well, Schelling speaks of a "spiritual crisis" necessary to break the consciousness of unity and to drive

⁴ Voegelin, *CW* 2: 150-51, 149. Voegelin is interpreting one of Schelling's latest works, the "Historical-critical Introduction" to his *Philosophie der Mythologie*, *Werke* II.1: 65 (Manfred Schröter edition with page numbers from the original K. F. A. Schelling edition).

individuals apart into nations. In remotest antiquity, he imagines, the absolute unity of humanity “was effected by a spiritual power,” and all later separations from this original unity were “caused by new spiritual powers springing up. The principle binding people into unity was *one* God.” In other words, the original religion of humanity was, in Schelling’s account, monotheistic, and “the means of separating [peoples] is polytheism.”⁵ These points bear significantly on Voegelin’s broader examination of race consciousness. Even in the early 1930s, he considered the National Socialist attempts at community formation to be far worse than what was once an acceptable, genuinely spiritual, though historically contingent form of polytheism.

Schelling’s focus on the “inner,” divine motivation for the development of mythical symbols in history likely played a considerable role in persuading Voegelin to discount the more common reasons given for the formation of new peoples and their myths—*e.g.*, natural disasters, trading practices and other types of cross-fertilization between cultures.⁶ Schelling’s elaborate account of divine “potencies” or powers actualizing themselves in human consciousness, and thus creating the discernable epochs in its history, seems to persuade Voegelin, as it did his teacher Othmar Spann,⁷ that the primary motivation for community formations in history is religious, not pragmatic.⁸

Political Religions

Voegelin commends Schelling briefly in his 1938 study of *Political Religions*. He credits

⁵ Voegelin, *ibid.*, 149, 151, 150. Schelling, *ibid.*, 207. Schelling’s notion of “spiritual crisis” as catalyst for epochal advances in history is discussed in Chapter 4. The functional equivalence of this notion and Voegelin’s understanding of historical “leaps in being” is discussed in Chapter 5.

⁶ *Cf.*, *OH* I: 14, 126, 409, 412; *OH* II: 1-14, 186-87; *OH* IV: 3,5. In these passages Voegelin emphasizes the “inner” origin of mythical symbolization and the impossibility of certain cultures influencing each other’s symbols across vast distances. In doing so, he leaves behind a common practice among social scientists, which attempts to find socio-economic causes for all hierophanic symbols.

⁷ Voegelin, *CW* 2: 113.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 150. Voegelin concludes his 1933 remarks on Schelling by noting (*Ibid.*, 153 n. 17) that “[t]he significance of Schelling’s philosophy of mythology for the theory of community is gradually becoming clear,” for example, in Ernst Cassirer’s *Philosophy of Symbolic Forms* (1925) and Gerbrand Dekker’s work on Schelling’s return to myth in *Die Rückwendung zum Mythos: Schellings letzte Wandlung* (1930).

Schelling with raising the “radical metaphysical question: Why is there Something; why is there not Nothing?” The ability to raise this question, which Voegelin laments as the “concern of few,” indicates to him that Schelling is beyond the purely temporal and scientific understanding of the world as mere “content” or fact. For Voegelin, Schelling has transcended the understanding of reality that is shared by “the large masses” who engage in little more than “political religiosity.” He has attempted to understand the world in its spiritual “existence.”⁹ The point of the reference is clear enough; but it is odd that Voegelin should attribute this “radical metaphysical question” to Schelling. In his later works, Voegelin more frequently attributes this question to Leibniz. There is at least one important consequence to the later change. Schelling asked this question in the context of his thoughts on God’s transcendent freedom from, and initial ability to create the “necessary” powers (*Potenzen*) of nature. And Schelling’s thoughts on divine freedom in existence, beyond the essence of divine necessity in nature, contributed greatly to his critique of Hegel.¹⁰ By shifting attention away from Schelling in his later references, Voegelin avoids discussion, perhaps unintentionally, of a serious problem with his critique of Schelling’s gnosticism. Schelling, like Voegelin himself, became a staunch critic of Hegel. But Voegelin never mentions in print that he is aware of Schelling’s existential critique of Hegel’s idealism. His awareness of this critique is to be found only in his unpublished “Last Orientation.”

“Plato’s Egyptian Myth”

The period in which Voegelin publishes moderate praise for Schelling draws to a close in

⁹ Voegelin, *Political Religions*. T. J. DiNapoli & E. S. Easterly III, trans., (Lewiston, N.Y.: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1986), 58.

¹⁰ Schelling’s most concentrated critique occurs in the Hegel chapter of *Zur Geschichte der neueren Philosophie*. For summary discussions of this critique see Bernard M. G. Reardon, “Schelling’s Critique of Hegel,” *Religious Studies* 20 (1984): 543-57; Andrew Bowie, “Translator’s Introduction,” *On the History of Modern Philosophy* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 23-37; and Voegelin’s posthumously published “Last Orientation,” *CW* 25: 213ff.

his 1947 article, "Plato's Egyptian Myth."¹¹ By this time, Voegelin had emigrated to the United States and had become an American citizen. His understanding of Schelling begins to show some changes. He draws on Schelling's philosophy of consciousness and mythology in his interpretation of a section in Plato's *Timaeus* (17-27b). But Schelling is mentioned only in a general way in the concluding "Note" to this article. This bibliographical irregularity, along with a curious claim made in the Note, may reveal the beginning of Voegelin's reticence to be associated with Schelling in his interpretation of Platonic myth, philosophy, and its historical significance.

The article's concluding Note begins with the following statement: "We have conducted the analysis of the Egyptian myth on the basis of Plato's work only." The claim is curious because it is only partly true. In the third section of his article, Voegelin writes: "we have to remember that the *Timaeus* is not the report of a historic event but the work of a poet and philosopher; we have to take our position outside the dialogue and to inquire into the meaning which the work has as a creation of Plato." Indeed, Voegelin seeks ultimately to interpret the entire dialogue as an historic event, as "a drama within the soul of Plato." He writes of Plato's poetic ability to "find Atlantis" through a recollective (anamnetic) investigation of "the collective unconscious which is also living in him."¹² But Plato's text is not the only basis for Voegelin's interpretation. Plato does not tell us in any of his dialogues about dramas in his soul—not to mention investigations of a "collective unconscious." Plato simply does not write in this way. This leaves a reader to wonder what informs Voegelin's external reading of the *Timaeus* and *Critias*. The second sentence of his article's concluding Note gives us an answer: "The problem of the idea [of a novel myth] and of its relations to the unconscious could be clarified considerably through a comparison with the work of the other great philosopher who struggled with it, that is through a comparison with the work of Schelling."

¹¹ Voegelin, "Plato's Egyptian Myth," *The Journal of Politics* 9/3 (August, 1947): 307-24.

¹² *Ibid.*, 323, 315, 316.

Voegelin admits that a comprehensive account of how Plato and Schelling struggled to understand the same phenomenon, the experienced need for new myths, “would require an extensive, preliminary presentation of Schelling’s philosophy” which, in turn, “would burst the framework of this article.”¹³ Voegelin is likely thinking of his own research on Schelling, which would soon lead to the writing of his “Last Orientation,” the text in which Voegelin provides the suggested presentation of Schelling’s philosophy requisite for understanding the aetiology of mythic symbols. In this manuscript, if not in the article, Voegelin reveals the extent of his indebtedness to Schelling’s account of the birth of mythical symbols through “protodialectic experiences” and “anamnetic” explorations of the “unconscious.” These terms refer simply to the claim that genuine symbols arise beyond the conscious intention of a symbol-maker. They arise from powerful experiences in the human soul and, so to speak, call out for names. A symbol-maker, then, “recollects” these experiences and gives them names—*e.g.*, Prometheus, Sisyphus, Oedipus. Such, at least, is the account of symbol formation that Voegelin takes to be thematic in Schelling’s work. Schelling, not Plato, is the principle guide to Voegelin’s understanding of “recollection” (*anamnesis*), both in its personal and historical dimensions.¹⁴ At this point in his career, Voegelin considers Schelling to be a “great philosopher,” and key elements from his *Philosophy of Mythology* have already started to play important roles in Voegelin’s “dramatic” and historical reading of Plato, later to develop into a cornerstone of his own philosophy. And yet, when compared to his earlier work, Voegelin has relegated public recognition of Schelling’s greatness in this respect to a concluding Note, claiming all the while to be interpreting the Atlantis myth “on the basis of Plato’s work only.”

¹³ *Ibid.*, 323.

¹⁴ See, for example, Voegelin’s sections on “The Anamnetic Dialogue” and “Anamnesis and History” in his “Last Orientation,” *CW* 25: 211-13.

2. THE STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE (1951-1981)

The New Science of Politics

In 1951, Voegelin gave the prestigious Walgreen Lectures at the University of Chicago. These were published the following year as *The New Science of Politics*. At this point, criticism begins to outweigh praise in Voegelin's published remarks on Schelling. The tone and substance of these remarks changes greatly in the *New Science*. Schelling is mentioned twice in this book: once in relation to Hitler, and once in relation to Hegel. The two citations are related by the general theme of "gnosticism." It is in his *New Science* that Voegelin presents most forcefully his innovative critique of modernity as a gnostic society. Surprisingly, Schelling is not exempted from Voegelin's criticism. This will appear as a perplexing development for readers already familiar with Voegelin's later works, where Schelling is eventually credited with coining one of the central terms, "pneumopathology," which Voegelin uses as part of his diagnosis of gnosticism as a "spiritual disease." In the *New Science*, Voegelin criticizes gnostic thinkers as "pneumopathological," but he does not call attention to Schelling as the one responsible for this coinage.¹⁵ He classifies Schelling only among the ranks of the spiritually sick. Later readers are left to wonder how Schelling could have been a gnostic thinker when he was also the one who coined a term central to Voegelin's critique of gnosticism. This ambiguity first appears in Voegelin's *New Science*: it remains throughout the rest of his published works.

Given the appreciation of Schelling evident in Voegelin's earlier writings, the portrayal given in his *New Science* is shocking. First, Schelling is related to Hitler. In the context of his discussion of gnosticism as the general nature of modernity, Voegelin writes: "Hitler's millennial prophecy [concerning the Third Reich] authentically derives from Joachitic speculation." Voegelin

¹⁵ For Voegelin's use of the term "pneumopathological," see *NSP*, 139, 169, 186.

refers to the historical speculation of Joachim of Fiore (1135-1202), for whom the order of history was understood as a progression along three distinct ages, each governed successively by the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit of Christian trinitarian symbolism. Voegelin suggests that Hitler's progressivism derives from a distinctively Christian type of historiography, albeit one which has been "mediated in Germany through the Anabaptist wing of the Reformation and through the Johannine Christianity of Fichte, Hegel, and Schelling." Schelling is now placed in a direct line of progressivist historical speculation that leads right to the comparatively "flat and provincial" self-understanding of National Socialism. The Third Age of Christian speculation has simply been replaced by the *Dritte Reich*, as propagandists acquire this symbol through "dubious literary transfers" from Moeller van den Bruck's tract of the same name.¹⁶ Voegelin does not explain this provocative notion in further detail. Instead, he leaves one to wonder how these "dubious literary transfers" relate to Hitler's "authentic" derivation of a millennial prophecy from a twelfth-century Italian monk. More to the point, it is odd that Schelling should be placed in this genealogical lineage, since scholars are now in a position to know that Voegelin was able to draw explicit distinctions between the historiography of Schelling and Joachim, distinctions based on solid exegetical grounds, in his "Last Orientation."

Voegelin has more to say about the particular character of Schelling as a gnostic thinker in his *New Science*. He argues that "gnostic experiences" are characterized by "an expansion of the soul to the point where God is drawn into the existence of man." People who "fall into these experiences" tend to "divinize themselves by substituting more massive modes of participation in divinity for faith in the Christian sense." Voegelin says that it is possible to distinguish "a range of Gnostic varieties according to the faculty [of the human soul] which predominates in the operation of getting this grip

¹⁶ Voegelin, *NSP*, 113.

on God." Schelling's particular variety of gnosis is described as "primarily intellectual" and "contemplative." He is joined explicitly in this regard by the company of Hegel.¹⁷ Voegelin's brief dismissal of Schelling raised no objections from any of his contemporaries. It was well in keeping with the conventional understanding of Schelling as an "Hegelian" idealist. But it is odd for Voegelin to equate Schelling's thought with Hegelian gnosis. Unlike many of his American contemporaries, Voegelin knew and appreciated the works in which Schelling was most critical of Hegel. Indeed, they provide significant grounds for Voegelin's celebration of Schelling's philosophical achievements in his "Last Orientation." Thus, by turning to dismiss Schelling as a gnostic thinker in the *New Science*, it would seem that Voegelin has changed his mind considerably about Schelling's significance for philosophy. But this claim would be difficult to substantiate, if only for the fact that Voegelin's comments are impressionistic and vague, rather than openly exegetical. At most, therefore, one can say that he now seems content to dismiss Schelling in a conventional way, despite his apparently novel remarks on gnosticism.

Order and History I-III

Voegelin reproduces this account of Schelling's gnosticism throughout most of *Order and History*. Schelling is not mentioned in the first volume, *Israel and Revelation* (1956). The first reference to Schelling is found in the second volume, *The World of the Polis* (1957); it is a reference to his gnosticism. Voegelin suggests that Schelling's *Ages of the World*, a relatively early work, contains mythic speculation that resembles Cabbalistic and theosophic forms of gnosis. Voegelin makes this suggestion in a footnote located in the broader context of his distinction between polytheistic and monotheistic types of myth in history. "While this is not the place to develop the problem further," Voegelin writes, "the suggestion may be thrown out that gnostic speculation, when

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 124.

it appears as demythization of the world is not an unbroken process; there may break through again, in the monotheistic phase of religiousness, a desire for remythization on the highest level of intellectual speculation. This certainly was the case of Schelling's *Weltalter*." ¹⁸ Voegelin never develops this suggestion further, at least with respect to Schelling's "remythization" of philosophy. He says only that Schelling's turn to myth is a "reversion" in contrast to Hesiod's comparatively free invention of mythic symbols. Within the context of his larger study, Voegelin's remark suggests that Schelling's turn to myth is historically regressive. Hesiod was free to write myths about the presence of divinities in the world, without being criticized as a gnostic, since he lived before the first true experience and symbolization of God's radical transcendence from the world, which, according to Voegelin, occurs in Judaeo-Christian revelation. But Schelling lived in the Christian era, a time when myth is ultimately subordinate to philosophy and revelation as the highest expressions of existential truth. Accordingly, Schelling's high regard for myth in his *Ages of the World* could appear to Voegelin as a nostalgic return to natural theology, albeit one "on the highest level of intellectual speculation," which tends to leave Schelling's thought open to the charge of being historically pedestrian.

The question of a philosopher's freedom to create mythic symbols resurfaces in the third volume of *Order and History* (1957). Voegelin writes of Plato's "freedom toward the myth" and Schelling's relative unfreedom in this regard. "[Plato] evokes the new myth of the soul; but he preserves an ironic tolerance toward the old myth, even in those instances where quite probably it

¹⁸ Voegelin, *OH* II: 136 n. 2. Schelling develops his own critique of theosophy, which nonetheless retains a measured respect for its manifestation in Jakob Böhme. Schelling describes Böhme as "a miraculous apparition in the history of humanity," words which remind us of Voegelin's own summary of Schelling in his "Last Orientation," but Schelling distinguishes the historical and scientific nature of his "positive philosophy" from the thoroughly mystical speculation of Böhme. See Schelling's *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, *Werke* II,3: 119-26; and the chapter on Böhme and theosophy in *Zur Geschichte der neueren Philosophie* (Bowie translation, 164-85).

has become unintelligible to him, because there is a truth in it even if it is no longer quite understood.”¹⁹ Like Hesiod, as one who lived before Judaeo-Christian experiences of divine revelation, Plato was free to create mythical symbols for human experiences of the divine. Yet, unlike Hesiod, Plato is said to have lived during a transitional time in history, when philosophy flourishes as a symbolic form between myth and revelatory theology. Due to his historical position, Plato’s approach to myth is thus considered to be free in two respects: He is free to make myths in a traditional way, but he is also free not to remain bound to myth as the exclusive symbolism for expressing human experiences of the divine. Unlike Hesiod, Plato has recourse to philosophy as a symbolic form for the depiction of such experiences. His philosophical consciousness of the perpetual difference between myths and the experiences they symbolize allows him to appreciate the intractable mysteries symbolized therein, without accepting them in an improperly literal way:

Plato knows that one myth can and must supersede the other, but he also knows that no other human function, for instance “reason” or “science,” can supersede the myth itself. The myth remains the legitimate expression of the fundamental movements of the soul. Only in the shelter of the myth can the sectors of the personality that are closer to the waking consciousness unfold their potentiality; and without the ordering of the whole personality by the truth of the myth the secondary intellectual and moral powers would lose their direction.²⁰

What may be true of Plato in this summary is certainly true of Schelling. Voegelin’s interpretation of Platonic myth is oriented by Schellingian notions. It is Schelling, not Plato, for whom the historical succession of myths becomes a thematic concern. It is Schelling who devotes explicit attention to elucidating how the “sectors of the personality,” or potencies of the soul, unfold their potentiality in historical succession. Plato does not write in this way, at least in his own name. It is Schelling who explicates what may have been implicit in Plato’s understanding of mythology.

¹⁹ *OH* III: 191. Voegelin takes the notion that every myth has its truth from Plato’s *Epinomis* (*Cf.* *OH* I: 11; *OH* III: 191; and *CW* 12: 93).

²⁰ *OH* III: 186. Voegelin’s account of Plato’s historical position between cosmological myth and revelatory theology tacitly agrees with Schelling’s account of the same. This thesis is argued in Chapters 4 and 5.

Accordingly, Voegelin appears still to be drawing upon Schelling's philosophy of mythology in his interpretation of Platonic myth.

Nonetheless, Voegelin has little more than criticism for Schelling in *Order and History* III. In contrast to Plato's "freedom toward the myth," Voegelin accuses Schelling of the vain supposition that all mysteries of the divine may be overcome through dialectical philosophy:

The coincidence that the creator of a myth is at the same time a great philosopher who knows what he is doing, as in the case of Plato, is unique in the history of mankind. Even in the case of Schelling, who ranks next to Plato as a philosopher of the myth, his achievement is marred by the gnostic inclination to intellectualize the unconscious and to reduce its movements to the formula of a dialectical process. Schelling cannot be quite absolved of the charge levelled by Irenaeus against the gnostics of the second century A.D.: "They open God like a book" and "They place salvation in the gnosis of that which is ineffable majesty."²¹

This is an odd charge to bring against Schelling. In his *Philosophy of Mythology and Philosophy of Revelation*, Schelling frequently makes a point of distinguishing between the types of knowledge that can be attained by mythical symbols and Christian revelation. Schelling makes his case clearly: myths, which he tends to depreciate as "pagan," cannot reveal God's "ineffable majesty." He argues that mythic symbols can reveal, at most, how the powers or "potencies" of nature form the mysterious basis of human consciousness—nothing more and nothing less. In other words, a myth can open only the book of nature, partially divine though it is, and reveal how it is experienced in the human soul. But nature, for Schelling, is not simply equivalent to God's "ineffable majesty." Schelling maintains that God's freedom from the world is what constitutes the true essence of divinity; freedom is more divine than nature. He does not claim that any myth or philosophical

²¹ *Ibid.*, 193. This criticism, that Schelling tended to intellectualize the unconscious depth of the soul, reappears in the 1970 essay "Equivalences of Experience and Symbolization in History" (*Cf.*, *CW* 12: 130). Schelling himself appears to have sensed the potential for this criticism of his philosophy of consciousness. At two points in his latest work he qualifies the formula used in his historical discussion of tensions between unconscious and conscious dimensions of the soul, saying that this language is merely hypothetical, a presupposition used to account for the present order of consciousness. See Schelling, *Philosophie der Mythologie*, *Werke* II,2: 523; and *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, *Werke* II,4: 8.

system can lay bare the transcendental majesty of divine freedom.²²

These points could not have escaped Voegelin while reading the *Philosophy of Mythology* and *Philosophy of Revelation*. Nonetheless, without reference to either of these works, Voegelin continues his critical contrast of Plato and Schelling. He writes:

The difference in the attitudes of the two philosophers is perhaps most clearly revealed in Schelling's criticism that Plato had to use the myth for expressing the fundamental relations of soul and cosmos because dialectical speculation could not yet serve him as the instrument for sounding the abyss [*i.e.*, of the unconscious ground of consciousness]. The criticism characterizes as a shortcoming in Plato, though as one that was conditioned by his historical position, precisely what we consider his greatest merit, that is, the clear separation of the myth from all knowledge that is constituted in acts of consciousness intending their objects.²³

Aside from being an amplification of the earlier point, it is interesting to note that Voegelin takes no exception to Schelling's account of Plato's "historical position." This is because Voegelin, like Schelling, thinks that Plato's mythology only "prefigures" the superior distinction between divine transcendence and cosmological immanence gained in Judaeo-Christian revelation.²⁴ When all of these points are taken into consideration, Voegelin's interpreters are left to wonder how he can truly praise Plato's free use of myth as his "greatest merit" when, in tacit agreement with Schelling and other Christian historicists, he suggests that Plato's historical position left him no other choice but to be free in this way.

Voegelin offers no textual references pertaining to where he thinks Schelling is guilty of interpreting myths in an improper way. In a later essay, however, he makes a similar contrast—this time between Platonic and Hegelian interpretations of myth—and provides textual references and arguments in support of the claim that Hegel improperly transforms mythical symbols into the concepts of his objectifying reason.²⁵ This point may help to explain Voegelin's curious treatment

²² These points are discussed with reference to Schelling's texts in Chapter 4.

²³ Voegelin, *OH* III: 193-94.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 92-3, 96, 226-7.

²⁵ See Voegelin, "On Hegel: A Study in Sorcery," *CW* 12: 232-33. This essay was originally published in 1971 as an extended version of a conference paper that was given in 1969.

of Schelling in the earlier text. It seems that, in *Order and History* III, Voegelin continues to conflate the thought of Schelling and Hegel in a manner consistent with the conventional understanding of these thinkers at the time of his writing.

A final point needs to be underscored, regarding the central matter at hand. As suggested previously, Voegelin criticizes Schelling's understanding of the significance of myth for philosophy, but he does so while continuing to use the distinguishing principles of Schelling's philosophy of the unconscious. This point can be substantiated by considering the broader context in which his critical remarks on Schelling have been found. For example, immediately before his critique of Schelling, Voegelin conveys the principles of what appears to be his own philosophy of mythology:

[T]he conscious subject occupies only a small area in the soul. Beyond this area extends the reality of the soul, vast and darkening in depth, whose movements reach into the small area that is organized as the conscious subject. The movements of the depth reverberate in the conscious subject without becoming objects for it. Hence, the symbols of the myth, in which reverberations are expressed, can be defined as the refraction of the unconscious in the medium of objectifying consciousness. . . . Before a philosopher can even start to develop a theory of the myth, he must have accepted the reality of the unconscious as well as of the relation of every consciousness to its own unconscious ground; and he cannot accept it on any other terms than its own, that is, on the terms of the myth. Hence, a philosophy of the myth must itself be a myth of the soul. That ineluctable condition is the chief obstacle to an adequate philosophy of the myth in an age in which the anthropomorphic obsession has destroyed the reality of man.²⁶

This is an excellent summary of the principles guiding Schelling's philosophy of mythology. Voegelin's focus on the unconscious origin of mythic symbols, the relation of consciousness to its unconscious ground, and the critique of "anthropomorphism" are all distinctive features of Schelling's philosophical interpretation of myth. In his "Last Orientation," Voegelin reveals that he is clearly aware of these points as thematic concerns in Schelling's thought, but he neglects to relate them to Schelling in the text under consideration.

²⁶ *OH* III, 192, 193.

The Schellingian interpretation of myth published in "Plato's Egyptian Myth" (1947) is reproduced almost verbatim in *Order and History* III, in the pages immediately preceding the critical remarks just considered.²⁷ In *Order and History* III, however, Voegelin drops the concluding "Note" in which he formerly alluded to the Schellingian presuppositions guiding his reading of Plato. Criticism replaces the acknowledgment of dependency in the earlier article, but Voegelin's interpretation of Platonic myth and its historical position remains the same—*i.e.*, Schellingian.

Wissenschaft, Politik und Gnosis

In 1958, Voegelin left his position at Louisiana State University and accepted an offer to establish the new Institute for Political Science at Ludwig-Maximilian University (Munich). The first major publication resulting from this move—*Wissenschaft, Politik und Gnosis*—appeared a year later. This text is an expanded version of Voegelin's inaugural lecture to the University. Voegelin refers to Schelling only once, in a passing remark on the gnostic character of Schelling's "philosophy of nature" (*Naturphilosophie*). The comment is important, however, because it reveals one of Voegelin's principle academic sources for his understanding of Schelling's gnosticism: the "monumental" work of Ferdinand Christian Baur, *Die christliche Gnosis, oder die Religionsphilosophie in ihrer geschichtlichen Entwicklung* (1835). In Baur's work, Voegelin contends, "[t]he speculation of German idealism is correctly placed in its context in the gnostic movement since antiquity."²⁸ Voegelin, following Baur, includes a surprisingly broad range of movements and thinkers under the heading of "German idealism": Böhme's theosophy, Schelling's nature-philosophy, Schleiermacher's doctrine of faith and Hegel's philosophy of religion. But Voegelin's

²⁷ Cf., *OH* III: 171-80.

²⁸ Voegelin, *Wissenschaft, Politik und Gnosis*, (München: Kösel-Verlag, 1959), 9. The English edition consulted is *Science, Politics and Gnosticism*, William J. Fitzpatrick, trans., (Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1990), 3.

reliance on Baur is surprising in another respect.²⁹ Baur published in 1835, roughly seven years before Schelling had completed his *Philosophy of Mythology* and *Philosophy of Revelation* and publicized these studies in his famous Berlin lectures. In these lectures, Schelling delivers a strong criticism of idealistic speculation in philosophy, precisely the type of thinking he once shared with Fichte and Hegel. Baur knew of and discussed only the earliest of Schelling's writings, in which he is indeed more easily classified with "speculative gnostics." Accordingly, it is not surprising that Baur's portrayal of Schelling drew no criticism from contemporaries to whom only the same works were known. But Voegelin's reliance on Baur is surprising because he had access to all of Schelling's later writings, and also because his "Last Orientation" reveals the great extent of his admiration for Schelling's critique of idealism. His decision to use an outdated secondary source to support his public dismissal of Schelling remains an inexplicable feature of the increasingly odd way that he presents Schelling's thought.

By this point in his career, the frequency of Voegelin's critical remarks against Schelling may suggest that he has left Schelling's guidance well behind. But such is not the case. Voegelin continues to use the Schellingian adjective *pneumopathischen* (pneumopathological) in his own diagnosis of gnosticism, but he continues to do so without reference to Schelling.³⁰ Despite the confusion that stems from this practice, one point has started to become clear. Voegelin's conflicting accounts of Schelling may have much to do with the tension that arises between his own reading of Schelling's later works and the portrayal of Schelling that he is partially compelled to accept from the most respected secondary sources.

²⁹ This reliance is not simply occasional. It resurfaces in Voegelin's later writing for a similar purpose (Cf., *OH V*: 53). Voegelin also credits Baur, not Schelling, with helping him to understand Hegel as a gnostic intellectual (Cf., "Response to Professor Altizer" [1975], *CW* 12: 296).

³⁰ Voegelin, *Wissenschaft, Politik und Gnosis*, *op. cit.*, 47, 69; English, 36, 57.

“Religionsersatz”

In 1960, Voegelin published a short essay in which he contends that the gnostic mass-movements of his time should be understood as pseudo-religions.³¹ He refers to Schelling twice in this essay. In his discussion of “gnostic ideas” that fall under tripartite divisions of history’s progressive order, Voegelin relates that “Schelling, in his speculation on history, distinguished three great phases of Christianity: first the Petrine, followed by the Pauline, which will be sealed by the Johannine phase of perfect Christianity.”³² This brief remark immediately follows an equally brief list of three-phase histories elaborated by Biondo, Turgot and Comte, Hegel, Marx and Engels—with no discussion of differences between any of these “systems.” This practice is by now typical of the casual manner in which Voegelin places Schelling in the company of such dubious thinkers as Hitler. A few pages later, however, Voegelin relates for the first time in print that it was Schelling who coined the term “pneumopathology” in order to diagnose the spiritual disease that Voegelin calls gnosticism. The remark in question occurs in the context where Voegelin wonders why Thomas More would have written his *Utopia*—a work that Voegelin says “traces the image of man and of society that [More] considers perfect”—when More himself knew “that this perfect state cannot be achieved in the world.” Voegelin’s commentary deserves to be quoted in full:

[More’s *Utopia*] opens up the problem of the strange, abnormal spiritual condition of gnostic thinkers, for which we have not as yet developed an adequate terminology in our time. In order, therefore, to be able to speak of this phenomenon, it will be advisable to use the term “pneumopathology,” which Schelling coined for this purpose. In a case like More’s, we may speak, then, of the pneumo-pathological condition of a thinker who, in his revolt against the world as it has been created by God, arbitrarily omits an element of reality in order to create the fantasy of a new world.³³

Clearly, Voegelin thinks that gnostics are pneumopathological, “spiritually diseased” thinkers who

³¹ Voegelin, “Religionsersatz: Die gnostischen Massenbewegungen unserer Zeit,” in *Wort und Wahrheit* 15/1 (1960): 5-18. This essay has been translated as “Ersatz Religion: The Gnostic Mass-Movements of Our Time” and appended to the English edition of *Science, Politics and Gnosticism*.

³² Voegelin, *Science, Politics and Gnosticism*, *op. cit.*, 95.

³³ *Ibid.*, 101.

occasionally act on their thoughts. They arbitrarily deny one aspect or another of reality in order to fantasize about new and perfect worlds, which they occasionally attempt to build. They are not “realists,” to use a term that Voegelin employs elsewhere to describe Schelling.

Digression on “Pneumopathology”

Voegelin’s first reference to Schelling’s formulation of the term “pneumopathology” should cause one to question the extent of Schelling’s gnosticism. Clearly, Schelling could not have been completely at variance with reality’s order if he was able to criticize spiritual sickness in much the same way that Voegelin criticizes gnosticism. How are we to explain this tension in Voegelin’s account of Schelling’s thought? Voegelin does not provide textual references to any of Schelling’s works in any of his published writings. Consequently, there are no references to where Schelling allegedly coined the term “pneumopathology.”³⁴ Voegelin first used this term in his *History of Political Ideas* (1945); it appears several times in the chapters published from this work under the title *From Enlightenment to Revolution* (1975).³⁵ In 1976, Theo Broerson wondered about this term and asked Voegelin where he had found it. Voegelin replied by saying that he could not remember. In a letter to Broerson, Voegelin recalls encountering the term some thirty years earlier, during his intensive studies of Schelling for the “Last Orientation,” but he writes that he is now unable to locate it in Schelling’s works: “I refer to it only, because I do not want to be accused by some Schelling scholar of having pinched the term without acknowledging its authorship.”³⁶ Voegelin’s concern to avoid “pinching” Schelling is interesting. By 1976, he had revealed more of his appreciation for

³⁴ Neither are there any references to this term in the following, standard referencing sources: the analytical table of contents to Schelling’s *Werke*, the secondary sources listed in my bibliography, the *Historisches Wörterbuch der Philosophie*, and the *Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Macmillan and Free Press, 1967-1972).

³⁵ Cf. *FER*, 117, 259, 263, 276. Schelling is not mentioned as the term’s author in any of these early references.

³⁶ Letter from Voegelin to Broerson, dated February 24, 1976 (Eric Voegelin Papers, Hoover Institution Archives, box 8, file 44). Voegelin’s comments to Broerson have been reproduced by the editors of volume 31 of his *Collected Works* (Cf., *CW* 31: 101 n. 35).

Schelling than has come to light thus far in my exegeses, but his enduring concern suggests a certain uneasiness, perhaps an awareness that he could have revealed more than the occasional references one finds scattered in his writings.

Working from these references, it is possible to determine that the specific term “pneumopathology” was of more importance to Voegelin than it was to Schelling. This is not to say that what the term signifies was unimportant to Schelling. On the contrary, there are several places in his *Works* where Schelling discusses the problem of “spiritual sickness,” essentially a revolt against God’s ordering of reality, that Voegelin calls “pneumopathology.” But Schelling seems to have preferred other terms for his description of this condition. For example, as early as 1797 Schelling writes: “*Mere reflection is . . . a spiritual sickness [Geisteskrankheit] of man.*”³⁷ These words foreshadow his later preoccupation with criticizing German idealism, what he calls “negative” or purely “rational” philosophy. To this end, Schelling elaborates a philosophical psychology (or philosophy of consciousness) that seeks to remind his interpreters that life experience always presents us with more to think about than what is typically accounted for by rational “systems” of philosophy based merely upon reflective consciousness. He maintains that consciousness (or the soul) is always grounded by an unconscious depth over which reflective consciousness can exercise no ultimate control. This is what accounts for the “realism” that Voegelin finds, in his “Last Orientation,” in Schelling’s discussion of the nature of philosophical representation.

In 1810, only three years after the publication of Hegel’s *Phänomenologie des Geistes*, Schelling begins to develop his critique of purely reflective systems of philosophy. He contends that an “illness of the temperament [*Gemüthskrankheit*]” will emerge if a proper understanding of relations between human beings and God breaks down: “For it is the soul [*viz.*, something broader

³⁷ Schelling, *Ideen zu einer Philosophie der Natur*, *Werke* I,2: 13.

than the conscious mind] through which man establishes a rapport with God, and no creature, especially no human being, can ever exist without this rapport.”³⁸ Schelling speaks of a “rapport” here, not of a constructed or reflective identity with the divine. According to the philosophical anthropology developed in his *Stuttgart Seminars*, Schelling would have thought it incorrect to speak of psychopathologies (*Seelenkrankheiten*). For he takes the soul to be what is most “impersonal” in humanity, and thus closest to the divine. Accordingly, he says that the soul cannot become ill, given its proximity to the divine. Only the spirit or conscious mind (*Geist*) can become ill, because it occupies a potentially confusing, volitional, middle-position between the soul and its passions. When the human spirit turns properly toward the divine ordination of the soul it becomes virtuous: when it turns toward the passions—especially nostalgia—it becomes vicious or corrupt. Thus, Schelling understands “spiritual sickness” as a perversion of the human spirit. In one instance, he describes the condition as the “consumption of the spirit [*Verzehrung des Geistes*].” This condition may result, for example, from excessive reflection on the idea of infinite progress, “the most distressing and empty thought of all.”³⁹ This “consumption” may be closest to what Voegelin has in mind when he says that Schelling coined the term “pneumopathology” in critical opposition to “the progressivism of his time.”⁴⁰ But what of the specific term? Since Voegelin could not remember where he found it, it has not been discovered by any of the secondary sources listed in my bibliography; and since Schelling discusses equivalent problems with the terms *Geisteskrankheit*, *Gemüthskrankheit* and *Verzehrung des Geistes*, it is reasonable to conclude that “pneumopathology” is Voegelin’s coinage for the host of critical terms used by Schelling.

³⁸ Schelling, *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen, Werke* 1,7: 469 (Pfau translation, 232).

³⁹ Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Werke* II,4: 13.

⁴⁰ Voegelin, “Reason: The Classic Experience,” *CW* 12: 278; *Anam.*, 102.

Anamnesis

In the 1966 publication of *Anamnesis: Zur Theorie der Geschichte und Politik*, Voegelin's German readers learn for the first time of his general agreement with Schelling's process theology. Schelling's theology attempts to describe how God allows himself to be experienced differently by human beings at different times in history. Voegelin's understanding of this theology is found in passing comments in a letter (November 1943) to his friend, Alfred Schütz, the phenomenologist. The letter has been published in *Anamnesis* under the title "On the Theory of Consciousness." Even though the references to Schelling are brief, they reveal how Schelling helped Voegelin to balance the conflicting works of Hegel and Kant. More specifically, Schelling helped Voegelin to appreciate the enduring legitimacy of "ontological speculation" (*Die ontologische Spekulation*), while continuing to accept the basic restrictions on human knowledge of divine transcendence developed in Kant's critical philosophy. The fact that Schelling addressed the fundamental question about the universe—"Why is Something, why is there not rather Nothing?"—is once again mentioned by Voegelin. Schelling's freedom to ask this question indicates to him that something in the human soul is always capable of transcending the logical determinations of thought that lead to the Kantian antinomies. Voegelin explains:

Ontological speculation is a legitimate philosophical undertaking, founded in precisely describable experiences, which it interprets with the means of "understandable" [*verstehbarer*] categories of process. The formalized Something as an alternative to Nothing is a correctly formed ontological concept. It is antinomic in Kant's sense, but the idealization of reason that leads to the antinomies is not "nonsense" [*Unsinn*], its problems are not "false problems" [*Scheinproblem*]. Schelling's "Something" is a symbol as much as is a logical or cosmological "infinite," a symbol justified inasmuch as it renders transparent the meditatively experienced real ground of being in finite language. . . . Schelling's question is significant insofar as it refers to the problem of process in the ground of being, the assumption of which seems to me to be an unavoidable requirement of system in a consistent interpretation of the ontological experience complex.⁴¹

Voegelin makes the further claim that process theology (*Prozesstheologie*), which he finds

⁴¹ Voegelin, *Anam.^{GER}*, 53-4; *Anam.*, 29-30.

particularly in Schelling's *Potenzenlehre*, is the "only meaningful systematic philosophy." He understands process theology as "a matter of developing a symbolic system that seeks to express the relations between consciousness, the transcending intraworldly classes of being [Schelling's divine potencies (*Potenzen*) of nature], and the world-transcending ground of being [what Schelling refers to as God's transcendent freedom from the world, or potency A⁰]." Process theology expresses these relations "in the language of a process constructed as an immanent one." As such, it resembles the theological language that Thomas Aquinas called the *analogia entis*. Voegelin commends Schelling's process theology for attempting, successfully it would seem, to describe experiences of divine transcendence with a "comprehensible" language of consciousness accessible "from within"—*i.e.*, from the concrete experiences of a human soul.⁴²

These statements indicate that Voegelin thought of Schelling, already in the early 1940s, as one who could help him to avoid the ontological extremes in the thought of Kant and Hegel. The "negative" (rational) and "positive" (historical) aspects of Schelling's philosophy allow Voegelin to appreciate the insights gained by Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, while avoiding its alleged inability to account for the historical aspects of human existence. Schelling's *Potenzenlehre* also allows Voegelin to avoid the obfuscation of boundaries between the human and the divine in Hegel's appeals to "absolute knowledge" precisely because of Schelling's greater ability to account for God's transcendent freedom from the world.

Schelling elaborated the *Potenzenlehre*, his doctrine of potencies, over several decades in his *Ages of the World*, *Philosophy of Mythology* and *Philosophy of Revelation*. Summarized briefly, it describes all of reality in terms of a tensional process of divine forces or potencies, consisting of divine immanence (natural necessity) and divine transcendence (freedom) as its fundamental poles.

⁴² *Anam.GER*, 50-1; *Anam.*, 26-7. My comments in brackets reflect the understanding of Schelling's *Potenzenlehre* that is found in Voegelin's "Last Orientation" (*Cf.*, *CW* 25: 208-09).

This process, according to Schelling, can never be abolished by human will or thought. Since reality is experienced by humans as a “tensional” process, it always remains mysterious. God’s freedom always transcends human understanding and control, Schelling maintains, and is properly approached by the interpretation of grace-experiences rooted in “faith.”⁴³ All of these points return in Voegelin’s criticisms of Hegel for allegedly attempting to destroy the intractable mystery of human consciousness. Against Hegel and in agreement with Schelling, Voegelin argues that human beings are akin to the divine, but nothing more. He maintains that the knowledge of how we are both alike and unlike the divine is gained in an historical process of divine revelations, but he sees no immediate end to the process of history.

These points of Schellingian realism are consistent features of Voegelin’s later thought, but it takes the better part of two decades before he again refers favorably to Schelling—and only in relatively informal public talks. The publication of *Anamnesis* marks the last time that Voegelin reveals anything substantively new in his appreciation of Schelling’s thought.

Order and History IV

In *Order and History IV* (1974), Voegelin returns to writing primarily for an English audience. His standard criticism of Schelling also returns. He reproduces the claim that Schelling was a Johannine gnostic, the point first suggested in *The New Science of Politics*. By this time, however, Voegelin has encountered some resistance to his claim that German idealism, in particular, should be understood as a form of gnosis, making similar claims to perfection as those found in the ancient gnosis of, say, Valentinus. Accordingly, Voegelin finds it necessary to distinguish between “the essential core and the variable part of a Gnostic system. The essential core,” Voegelin continues, “is the enterprise of returning the pneuma [spirit] of the Beyond through action based on

⁴³ These points will be elaborated with reference to Schelling’s texts in Chapters 2, 3 & 4.

knowledge. Moreover, the god of the Beyond to whom the Gnostic speculator wants to return must be identical, not with the creator-god but with the god of the creative tension "before there was a cosmos."⁴⁴ Voegelin warns that to exclude German idealism from this essential core of gnosticism we "must ignore the fact that the modern Gnostics do not appeal to Valentinus or Basilides as their ancestors but to the Gospel of John. One must ignore, for instance, that Schelling has developed a law of three phases for Christian history: The Petrine Christianity was followed by the Pauline of the Reformation; and the Pauline will now be followed by the Johannine Christianity of the German speculative systems."⁴⁵

Schelling's discussion of the three phases of Christianity occurs in Lecture XXXVII of his *Philosophy of Revelation*. Schelling says nothing about his teaching as a "law" of Christian history that is "now" to be fulfilled by "German speculative systems." Rather, he appeals to a Johannine phase of Christianity, not as something to be forced into existence by the will of a human speculator, but as a *bona fide* eschatological symbol, much like Voegelin's own account of the historical emergence of "universal humanity," found in the conclusion of *Order and History* IV. According to Schelling, Johannine Christianity is equivalent to "philosophical religion." It is the type of religion, he claims, which will come about when God brings history as we know it to an end. At this time, humans will no longer feel the need to distinguish between the real and the ideal. Human consciousness will be reconciled to its God. Schelling maintains clearly that this type of religion does not yet exist. His appeals to philosophical religion describe his hope of being reunited with God beyond history as we know it, nothing more and nothing less. He does not say that speculative philosophy can bring about this transfigured state of human existence. It will have a divine cause and will complete God's work in creation.

⁴⁴ Voegelin, *OH* IV: 20.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 21.

Schelling links this Johannine phase of Christianity with St. John's vision of the "new Jerusalem" (Rev. 21:9ff.): "John is the apostle of the Church to come, the only truly universal Church; he is the apostle of this second and new Jerusalem, which he himself saw descending from the heavens."⁴⁶ Schelling even wonders if "Church" is still the right word for a divinely transfigured "city of God [*Stadt Gottes*]" in which Jews, Pagans and Christians all live united in the presence of the divine, without needing to distinguish between themselves along the lines of their former religions. But he is clear about when this phase of Christianity is supposed to ensue: "[T]he Apostle [John] poses this time as being the end [*das Ende*], and even this ultimate being-all-in-all of God [*dieses letzte alles in allem Seyn Gottes*] will not be in the manner of a pure *theism*, in the sense of our theists and rationalists: on the contrary, it will be a theism which presupposes and contains in itself all the path [*i.e.*, the history and natural unfolding] of God."⁴⁷ The "function of saint John," in other words, the period of Johannine Christianity, "begins with the time of Christ's return, therefore with the last time of the Church." Schelling realizes that this "time" has not yet come. "This Church is, to speak truthfully, always still to come [*noch immer zukünftig*], since until now the two elements [Jewish and Pagan] are still discernable."⁴⁸ So much for the return of Christ in Schelling's positive philosophy of history. I have emphasized the time and manner in which Schelling expects history to end because these points speak against Voegelin's treatment of Schelling as a modern gnostic comparable to Hegel. But what of the God with whom Schelling longs to be reunited? Is Schelling's understanding of God consistent with the theology that Voegelin ascribes to gnostics?

Voegelin's claim that gnostics seek a God who is "identical, not with the creator-god but

⁴⁶ Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Werke* II,4: 328.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 321, 328, 333.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 331, 327.

with the god of the creative tension ‘before there was a cosmos’” recalls the well-known point that ancient gnostics despised nature and its god; they sought perfection in a God who had nothing to do with the creation of this world. But a fundamental point speaks against including Schelling in such company. Schelling’s early fame arose from his *Naturphilosophie*, precisely the style of thinking that contributed to charges of his pantheism. The gnostics alluded to by Voegelin were not pantheists in any sense of the term. They acknowledged only the aspect of divinity that completely transcends the world. But Schelling held nature itself to be divine, not an aberration created by a pseudo-divinity. And he maintained this view of nature throughout all of his mature works, despite the fact that the focus of his thought changed with the 1809 publication of his philosophical investigations into the nature of freedom.

The later Schelling accepted various accounts of nature as fallen. But a closer look at Schelling’s account of the Fall reveals that his thought was closer to orthodox Christianity than to gnosticism. Schelling’s account of the Fall is found in Lectures XVI and XVII of his *Philosophy of Revelation*. Unlike ancient gnostics, Schelling says that God’s creation is essentially good, that the tensional powers of nature (matter, spirit, and self-consciousness) are unified in the beginning and at rest in a divine Sabbath.⁴⁹ In this, he follows traditional Christian readings of the *Genesis* story of creation in its “seventh day.” Schelling says that God ordained “original man” to preserve the unity of divinity and creation. But he also maintains that God created humanity with the freedom to live in acceptance of nature’s harmonious tensions, with God as their cause, or to rebel against the divine ordination of creation by attempting to proclaim humanity as the ultimate cause of all things.⁵⁰ In accordance with traditional readings of *Genesis*, Schelling accepts the notion that humans eventually fall. They do so by attempting to arrogate God’s free creative powers to

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 365.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, 357, 349.

themselves. Their fall does not occur all at once. It is a process in which they increasingly posit the world “outside God, not simply *praeter*, but *extra Deum*”; they begin to think of God’s world as the creation of their own wills.⁵¹ When humanity revolts against God’s creation in this way it sets in motion a new tensional process, one that causes the original unity of God and creation to be divided into divine transcendence (the God of conventional theology) and divine immanence (the divinity of nature in pagan theologies). Schelling explains the consequences of this divide as follows: “between this new tension, which survives in human consciousness, and the original one, which was in the creation, there is a great difference: the original tension was created by the will of God; the second is created by man; man has therefore put himself in the place of God and, to speak truthfully, in place of the God who was the *cause* of the tension and whom we have called the *Father*. Man usurps in this way the rightful majesty of God [*das Majestätsrecht Gottes*].” To continue in the terms of Schelling’s trinitarian language: “The tension caused by man has separated the Son [the demiurgic creator of the world] from the Father [the substance of creation].”⁵² Schelling thinks of the entire history of the world as an overcoming of the Fall, as the Son’s return to the Father. In other words, history is Christ writ large, a drama of salvation in which all of creation shall eventually be restored to the Father.⁵³

It would seem that Schelling’s alleged “gnosticism” is not beyond dispute. Schelling understands all of creation, before and after the Fall, as an order of divine tensions. The God with whom he longs to be reunited is the creator of the originally harmonious tensions of nature—the “Son” of Christian theology, not the gnostic god “before there was a cosmos.” Schelling does not

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 352. Schelling has Fichte’s ego-based dialectics in mind here.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 366, 371.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 375ff. Voegelin eventually makes the same claim about history (“Immortality: Experience and Symbol” [1967], *CW* 12: 78), but he does so in the context of a discussion of how Thomas Aquinas came to understand the historical Christ as the Lord of all humanity.

strive to know only the transcendental aspect of divinity. In other words, he does not indulge in the fantastic desire to be anything more than a creature, either now or in the transfigured creation toward which he directs his eschatological hopes. This much can be suggested in a preliminary way, but a thorough treatment of this matter lies beyond the scope of the present chapter.

From Enlightenment to Revolution

In 1975, Voegelin allowed John Hallowell to edit and publish considerable portions of his abandoned *History of Political Ideas* under the title *From Enlightenment to Revolution*, where Schelling is mentioned several times in a favorable light. Voegelin credits Schelling with solving the problem of phenomenistic science. With his "*Potenzienlehre* and the philosophy of the unconscious," Schelling exposes the superficiality of a scientific community that attempts to limit itself to the discussion of phenomena alone. Voegelin also mentions the problem of the three-stage philosophies of history that developed "in the wake of Schelling," and which became "an increasingly important strand in the fabric of modern political ideas." But he distinguishes Schelling's progressive historiography from positivist accounts of history's necessary march toward the human perfection of humanity:

The construction of Turgot-Comte was defective because in the concept of the third stage [of history] the problem of [natural] substance was not shown in a further phase of development, but was simply excluded from consideration. If we do not exclude it, but conscientiously continue the line of thought initiated in the description of the first phase, the question will arise: what becomes of the problem of substance once it has passed beyond the stage of anthropomorphic symbolism? We know the answer given by Schelling in his philosophy of the theogonic process and in the new roles assigned to the protodialectic experiences and their dialectical elaboration. But we also know Schelling's ultimate dissatisfaction with a type of philosophical speculation that is a poor substitute for the forceful imagery of mythology, a dissatisfaction that leads him to expound the necessity for a new myth of nature. When it comes to the symbolization of substances, the myth is a more adequate mode of expression than a critical concept which can only clarify our experience but cannot incarnate the substance itself.⁵⁴

This passage, written in the early 1940s, reveals the general tone of Voegelin's "Last Orientation."

⁵⁴ Voegelin, *FER*, 115, 116.

It reveals Voegelin's early contention that Schelling's critical philosophy properly addresses the problem of the substantial speculation ignored by positivism. Second, and in direct contrast to the claims made in *Order and History* III, it reveals Voegelin's understanding of Schelling's sensitivity to myth. There is no intimation that Schelling suffered from an inclination to "intellectualize the unconscious," reducing its manifestations in consciousness to the machinations of a dialectical formula. To be sure, Voegelin's willingness to publish these comments in 1975 hardly amounts to a retraction of his former criticisms of Schelling. But it does reveal that Voegelin may have known better than to dismiss Schelling in accordance with conventional accounts of his idealism.

Voegelin continues by stating that a philosopher's response to "the destruction of the myth, to the dedivinization (*Entgötterung*) of the world," can take either "contemplative or activist" forms. He praises Schelling's contemplative response to the destruction of myth by modern science. This response was supported, more specifically, by Schelling's effort to rehabilitate a properly mythical understanding of the world. Voegelin finds a similar effort in Henri Bergson, whose *Deux sources de la morale et de la religion* is described as having been written "strongly under the influence of Schelling." Voegelin praises these contemplative responses in contrast to the "pneumopathology" of activist responses in Saint-Simon and Comte.⁵⁵ He suggests that the contemplative response can best be found "in Schelling's *Philosophie der Mythologie und der Offenbarung*." No specific references are given to these texts, but Voegelin summarizes their content as follows:

The spiritual process in which the symbols of myth and dogma are created is recovered from the unconscious through *anamnesis* (recollection), and the symbols actually created in the course of human history are interpreted as meaningful phases of the theogonic process [*i.e.*, process theology], manifesting itself in history on rising levels of spiritual consciousness. In this contemplative attitude the myth of the past need not be abandoned as the aberration

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 117. There are several other references to "pneumopathology" and "spiritual disease" in this volume (*Cf.*, 259, 263, 276). These references indicate that Voegelin knew of the term already in his *History of Political Ideas*—though, curiously, it does not appear in the Schelling chapter of this work.

of an undeveloped intellect but can be understood as a necessary step in the expression of spiritual reality. It can be superseded historically but not invalidated in its own place by subsequent fuller and more differentiated symbolic expressions.⁵⁶

This is an excellent summary, both of Schelling's latest historiography and of Voegelin's own. It indicates how each thinker attempts to balance the discovery of permanent truths in historical experience with the considerable changes that also emerge in their symbolic expressions.

Finally, Voegelin defends both Schelling and Hegel against Bakunin's suggestion that German idealists have brought about the same revolution in the intellectual world that Napoleon brought about in the socio-political world. Voegelin draws a clear line between the "derivative Christianity of Hegel and Schelling," on the one hand, and the "revolutionary speculation of Bakunin" on the other: "Hegel's and Schelling's interpretations of history were contemplative in the sense that the understanding of history was for them the most important cathartic exercise in clarifying and solidifying their own existence. However far their ideas diverged from orthodox, dogmatic Christianity, however far they went in the direction of Gnosis, they still remained substantially Christian thinkers and were concerned about the order of their souls."⁵⁷ Voegelin's later appraisal of Hegel, as previously suggested, diverges widely from these relatively charitable remarks. He eventually criticizes Hegelian philosophy, using his favorite Schellingian term of critique, as a "pneumopathological" flight from the actual world of experience to the imaginary construction of a "Second Reality."⁵⁸ However, Voegelin never develops the same type of critique of Schelling. Instead, his work begins to show greater signs of the importance of Schelling in his philosophical development.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 116-17.

⁵⁷ Voegelin, *FER*, 197, 199.

⁵⁸ *Cf.*, Voegelin, "On Hegel: A Study in Sorcery" (1971), *CW* 12: 236.

3. ACKNOWLEDGING THE IMPORTANCE OF SCHELLING (1981-1985)

Autobiographical Remarks

In the last four years of his life, Voegelin begins to acknowledge the considerable extent of Schelling's guidance in his philosophical development. He does so in the context of autobiographical reflections on his decision, several decades earlier, to abandon his projected *History of Political Ideas*. Schelling was not mentioned in Voegelin's first published account of this decision, in a 1966 Memorial to Alfred Schütz.⁵⁹ However, in 1973, Voegelin discussed Schelling's significance for his work during the course of a two-week series of interviews that he granted to a former student, Ellis Sandoz, most of which were published in *The Voegelinian Revolution* (1981). Voegelin recalls the time when he was engaged in the research and writing of his *History of Political Ideas*. He says: "While working on the chapter on Schelling, it dawned on me that the conception of a history of ideas was an ideological deformation of reality. There were no ideas [in history] unless there were symbols of immediate *experiences*."⁶⁰

Schelling's role in this insight is somewhat unclear from this remark. It is initially uncertain whether Voegelin's realization was brought on by insights conveyed through Schelling's works or through his discovery of their fundamental errors. In 1983, Voegelin makes further public remarks that begin to clarify this ambiguity. In his "Autobiographical Statement At Age Eighty-Two," Voegelin says that his history of ideas "crashed" when he studied Schelling's philosophy of mythology. He describes Schelling as "an intelligent philosopher"—no longer as a gnostic

⁵⁹ *Anam. GER*, 19-20.

⁶⁰ Voegelin, quoted in Ellis Sandoz, *The Voegelinian Revolution* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 77. This remark is reproduced in *AR* [1989], 63. Here Voegelin mentions, in addition, that the original project for a small textbook also "exploded" due to his studies of the ancient Israelite and ancient Near Eastern texts that would have to be interpreted in a comprehensive study of political order in Western history. Despite these other, technical reasons for the collapse of his original project, Schelling is increasingly singled out as the major, theoretical catalyst for the change in program.

intellectual—and recalls how he was affected by his studies of Schelling in the mid-1940s: “when I studied the philosophy of the myth, I understood that ideas are nonsense: there are no ideas as such and there is no history of ideas; but there is a history of experiences which can express themselves in various forms, as myths of various types, as philosophical development, theological development, and so on. . . . So I cashiered that history of ideas, which was practically finished in four or five volumes, and started reworking it from the standpoint of the problem of the experiences. That is how *Order and History* started.”⁶¹ This remark indicates clearly that Voegelin’s re-reading of Schelling had much to do with his decision to rework the structure of the large project that eventually became his *magnum opus*. However, Schelling is only criticized in *Order and History*. How was Voegelin able to rework his *History of Political Ideas* on Schellingian grounds, while rejecting the man whose thought served as the major catalyst for this reorientation?

After mentioning the role Schelling played in the reorientation of his thought, in his interviews with Sandoz, Voegelin relates that it took some time before *Order and History* emerged as we know it. He says: “I would characterize the five years between 1945 and 1950 as a period of indecision, if not paralysis, in handling the problems that I saw but could not intellectually penetrate to my satisfaction. . . . [O]n the whole it was a period of theoretical paralysis with mounting problems for which I saw no immediate solutions.” Voegelin says that his “work did not stop” during this five-year period, including work at departmental responsibilities. Specifically, he was elected by his department, at Louisiana State University, to teach courses in Chinese government. This meant that he had to begin learning Chinese and to study Chinese history.⁶² These studies might have helped Voegelin to overcome his period of theoretical paralysis, for they provided him with an opportunity to reflect on one of the central problems encountered by Schelling’s philosophy

⁶¹ Voegelin, “Autobiographical Statement At Age Eighty-Two,” *op. cit.*, 119.

⁶² Voegelin, *AR*, 64.

of history: the relative lack of historical development in Chinese symbols.

The cornerstone of Schelling's historiography, as discussed at length in Chapter 4, is his attempt to argue that human consciousness differentiates or "unfolds" in a relatively homogeneous pattern throughout all civilizations in world history. Schelling goes to great lengths to find similar patterns of emerging self-consciousness in the West, the ancient Near East, and India. Some of his results are worthy of further consideration. He is able to show, with varying degrees of success, that mythological consciousness begins in all of these cultures with the symbolization of the sky, earth, and sea as principle gods exercising a considerable measure of control over human life. He also finds that roughly contemporaneous "spiritual crises" in these cultures lead them to the next phase of historical development. In suffering these crises, ancient mythologists gradually become aware of the role played by their own consciousness in the symbolization of divinity. Their symbols "unfold," or show greater signs of self-consciousness, as they begin to reflect on the precise nature of relations between humanity and divinity. But Schelling is unable to demonstrate that Chinese symbolism unfolds in accordance with the pattern he finds in other cultures. He is faced with the problem that Chinese symbolists seem to retain a compact way of thinking, specifically because they fail to attain consciousness of God's world-transcendent divinity on their own. According to Schelling, this notion is brought to them only much later by people from the West. He acknowledges the problem that differences in the nature of Chinese symbolism presents to his theoretical account of the emergence of consciousness in world history, and he attempts to resolve this problem by using Chinese symbolism as a counter-measure against which the unfolding cultures can be understood as having attained "higher" levels of consciousness. But his solution seems to have persuaded no one completely, at times not even Schelling himself. In the final analysis, his work leaves unresolved the problem of what appears to be a European bias in his thoughts on the development of human consciousness.

This was certainly one of the problems that had to be faced by Voegelin as he recast his philosophy of history on Schellingian grounds; it likely contributed to his period of theoretical paralysis. But the extent to which Voegelin might have struggled with such problems because of his reading of Schelling during this time cannot be determined with any precision: there simply is not enough evidence.

Order and History V

Voegelin sent two outlines of the manuscript for his last volume of *Order and History* to his publisher, one in 1969 and the other in 1971, both of which reveal that the chapter on Schelling from his "Last Orientation" was to be included.⁶³ Had Voegelin published this chapter with only the stylistic revisions he said were needed, he would have overturned the estimation of Schelling given in the preceding volumes of *Order and History*. The reasons why Voegelin ultimately decided not to include this chapter remain unknown. But this much is clear: Voegelin concludes *Order and History* with one of his most perplexing estimations of Schelling's significance in the history of modern philosophy.

Schelling is mentioned only once in the last volume of *Order and History*. Voegelin writes: "As we know from numerous statements by Reinhold, Fichte, Schelling, Hegel, Friedrich Schlegel, and Schiller, the actors of the event," *i.e.*, the German revolution in consciousness, "interpreted it as the German variant of the general revolution that was taking place on the pragmatic level in America, France, and the Netherlands (Batavian Republic of 1795). They derived the intenseness of their fervor from the sense of participating in a world-historic revolution of consciousness."⁶⁴

⁶³ See *CW* 28: 241, 243, and 239 (for Voegelin's comment on the merely stylistic revisions needed for this chapter). The editors for this volume of the *Collected Works* confirm that the proposed chapter "On Schelling" for the last volume of *Order and History* was indeed the same one from the *History of Political Ideas* (Cf. *ibid.*, xxiv, n. 11).

⁶⁴ Voegelin, *OH V*: 50-1.

This is the last of Voegelin's published references to Schelling. By placing him in the company of German idealists, Voegelin tends to blur the lines more than ever between thinkers who have been distinguished by scholarship.⁶⁵ Voegelin's comment implies his acceptance of the conventional account of Schelling as an Hegelian idealist. This impression is reinforced by the volume's editor, Paul Caringella, Voegelin's personal secretary. Caringella footnotes Voegelin's remark and cites M.H. Abrams' *Natural Supernaturalism* for "representative statements" by Schelling and others.⁶⁶ However, Abrams' work provides no new grounds for thinking that Schelling remained an idealist. It reproduces the conventional account of Schelling by focusing its discussion almost exclusively on his earliest, most idealistic writings, when he was closely associated with Fichte and Hegel. Abrams, like Voegelin in *Order and History*, does not distinguish periods in Schelling's philosophical development. Consequently, he neglects to mention that Schelling became an important critic of both Fichte and Hegel.

CONCLUSION

These remarks conclude my survey of Voegelin's published references to Schelling. This chapter has established that there are periods in Voegelin's published references to Schelling: (1) the period of moderate praise and acknowledged dependency, from 1933 to 1947; (2) the period in which Voegelin criticizes Schelling's gnosticism, from 1951 to 1981; and (3) the last years of Voegelin's life, from 1981 to 1985, when he offers high praise of Schelling in private conversations and public talks while reproducing his critique of Schelling's gnosticism in *Order and History*.

⁶⁵ For example, see my bibliographic references to works by Tillich, Spann, Bolman, Gutman, Heidegger, Schulz, Tilliette, Hayes, Reardon, and Fackenheim. In recent years, the ability of these earlier authors to distinguish Schelling's thought from German idealism has been confirmed by Bowie, Beach, Danz, Žižek, and Pfau.

⁶⁶ *OH V*: 51 n. 2; M. H. Abrams, *Natural Supernaturalism*, (New York: 1971).

Certain questions have emerged that I will attempt to answer in the chapters that follow. Voegelin consistently criticizes Schelling in *Order and History*, written primarily for an English-speaking audience, while he offers increasingly sympathetic references to his thought in German publications, articles, and public talks. Why is this so? Furthermore, how can one understand Schelling as the gnostic thinker targeted by Voegelin's critical remarks, when he also appears to have been one of the principle guides used by Voegelin in the formulation of his critique of gnosticism as a "pneumopathological" disorder? In light of this critique, could one sustain the argument that Voegelin's philosophical anthropology differs significantly from Schelling's own? In other words, given that both philosophers attempt to recover a Platonic understanding of human existence and a mythological sense of order, does Voegelin's understanding of *anamnesis* and the way in which mythological symbols rise to articulate speech differ significantly from Schelling's? Finally, given Plato's relative lack of concern for what might be called the historicity of consciousness, what role might Schelling's philosophy of history have played in helping Voegelin to understand the historical dimension of philosophical truth?

These questions have arisen from conflicts in Voegelin's published remarks. In order to gain a better understanding of the conflicts and their broader theoretical implications, it is necessary to turn to an examination of Voegelin's unpublished study of Schelling, the "Last Orientation" section of his *History of Political Ideas*. Once the specific points that Voegelin admired in Schelling's thought have been clarified, it will be possible to undertake an examination of his later works in order to question the extent of Schelling's continuing guidance.

CHAPTER TWO

VOEGELIN'S UNPUBLISHED ASSESSMENT OF SCHELLING: "LAST ORIENTATION"

Voegelin's "Last Orientation" was written in the Summer of 1945, during the time described in the previous chapter as his period of moderate praise for Schelling's thought. But the account it develops is anything but moderate. Nowhere else in all of his writings does Voegelin hold a philosopher in such high esteem. Despite this basic point, however, a fundamental problem needs to be mentioned from the outset which will determine certain limits for the interpretation that follows. Voegelin never revised this work for publication. Many of its discussions have been left incompletely argued and reveal little more than his early impression of subjects that would receive further treatment elsewhere. Accordingly, the "Last Orientation" cannot be used as the sole basis for criticizing Voegelin's understanding of the themes it presents. This situation tends to restrict my role to that of a reporter. But there is much to report. Voegelin's "Last Orientation" is of considerable use to special studies on the development of his thought. To wit, no other text reveals more of the extent to which Voegelin was a careful interpreter of Schelling.

This Part of the *History of Political Ideas* is comprised of four chapters and a few pages of introductory remarks. The main body of this work is the second chapter. It is devoted to a thoughtful analysis of Schelling's attempt to reconstitute the perennial concerns of philosophy on individual, political and historical levels. The other chapters supplement Voegelin's interpretive work on Schelling. The first chapter furnishes the historical context in which the thought of Schelling needs to be understood. The third chapter is a comparatively brief note on Hölderlin's revival of pagan nature symbolism and his reinterpretation of ancient myth, both of which are said to be determinants of Schelling's work. The last chapter discusses the decline from Schelling's

philosophical realism to the nihilism of Nietzsche, a general movement that, for Voegelin, characterizes the spirit of Western philosophy in the twentieth century.

Voegelin's "Introductory Remarks" underscore the problem of civilizational disintegration. This problem is said to characterize increasingly the past three centuries of Western history. Put simply, Voegelin finds that Western civilization is disintegrating because Christianity has become incredible in some respects, and misunderstood in others, as the public cult by which Western cultures were once united. Christianity has disintegrated as a public cult, and a defensibly superior understanding of spiritual matters has yet to arise in its place. In the process of decay, spiritual confusion becomes especially acute from the mid-nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries. Voegelin describes this period as the "century of crisis." Thinking within and about this crisis, he argues that it is no longer possible for intellectual historians to distinguish between "the continuous evolution of a predominant complex of problems on the one hand, and sub-institutional complexes which press toward the surface on the other hand" (175).¹ Voegelin no longer finds himself to be living in a civilization that exists in continuity with its past. The civilizational drive toward "spiritual maturation," a characteristic that Voegelin discerns in Medieval thought, has given way to a wide open field of disorientation and confusion.²

1. DISORDER AND ITS RECENT HISTORY: "PHENOMENALISM" AND THE RISE OF MODERNITY

The first chapter of "Last Orientation" attempts to reveal what lies at the heart of the present crisis in the natural and human sciences.³ Voegelin begins by describing an increasingly pervasive feature

¹ Unless indicated otherwise, all in-text page references are to Voegelin's "Last Orientation," *CW* 25: 173-303. I have used Voegelin's translations of Schelling in this chapter.

² For Voegelin's account of Medieval thought, see "The Structure of the Saeculum" (*CW* 20:105-204), an earlier section in the *History of Political Ideas*.

³ Voegelin uses the term "science" in three ways: (1) with reference to the natural and human "sciences" of essences and appearances, a favorable and broad use of the term science, recalling Aristotelian

of modern thought, namely, “phenomenalism.” This term refers to the preoccupation “with the phenomenal aspects of the world, as they appear in [modern] science, and the atrophy of awareness of the substantiality of man and the universe.” This term is not used in critical opposition to science *per se*. Rather, it designates “sentiments, imaginations, beliefs, ideas, speculations, as well as patterns of conduct determined by them, which originate *on occasion* of the [modern] advancement of mathematized science” (178-9). To be sure, Voegelin knows that the study of phenomena—the noetic (intellectual) and aesthetic (perceptual) appearances of things—is nothing new. However, that which gives phenomenalism its distinctively modern twist is the systematic attempt to exclude from the scope of rational inquiry any questions pertaining to the substantial ground of reality. Voegelin attempts to break free from what he perceives to be unscientific restrictions in his intellectual climate. This attempt makes him initially difficult to understand, especially for those still engulfed in the language of the crisis itself. Put differently, Voegelin does not tend to speak the language of the academe. For him, “romantic” and “empiricist,” “liberal” and “conservative,” “evolutionist” and “creationist” are not weighty terms of analysis. At most, they reflect only the professional jargon of phenomenologists. The extensive use of such terms suggests that the spiritual sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*) of politics, philosophy and historiography are being eclipsed by “scientism.”⁴ This term designates “the belief in mathematized science as the model science to the methods of which all other sciences should conform” (178).⁵ Scientism is a critical term for what is normally called

epistamai and Germanic *Wissenschaften*; (2) with reference to modern “scientism,” a pejorative use of the term, indicating the restriction of knowledge to quantifiable aspects of experience; and (3) with reference to the “science” of substance and appearances, indicating the critical clarification of classical realms of knowledge that Schelling and Voegelin, among others, attempt to defend.

⁴ Voegelin borrows this term from F. A. von Hayek’s “Scientism and the Study of Society,” in *Economica* vol. IX, no. 32 (1942); X, no. 37 (1943); XI, no. 41 (1944).

⁵ On the nineteenth-century character of the spiritual sciences (*Geisteswissenschaften*), and the attempt to distinguish these from the methods of the natural sciences, see Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, 2nd rev. ed., Joel Weinsheimer and Donald G. Marshall, trans. & rev. (New York: Crossroad Publishing Corp., 1992), 3-42, 551-79. For Voegelin’s understanding of the spiritual sciences, see the “Editors’ Introduction” to his first book, *On the Form of the American Mind* (*CW* 1: ix-xxxv).

positivism. But Voegelin is attempting to describe a more extensive problem than is usually caught by the terms “scientism” or “positivism.” These terms indicate to him only a specific form of the general crisis in the sciences that he calls phenomenism.

Voegelin claims that the rise of phenomenism was preceded historically by “the atrophy of Christian spirituality and the growth of intramundane sentiments” (179). He offers no sustained comments on what caused this atrophy.⁶ At this point he is more concerned with addressing further misconceptions that may arise with regard to the meaning of “phenomenism.” Accordingly, he warns that it is not simply equivalent to materialism. Materialists can be phenomenists, when matter is taken to be what appears only to the senses. But this is merely the case with vulgar materialism. Voegelin does not find the problem of phenomenistic thinking in the “true materialism” of Lucretius, George Santayana, and Paul Valéry.⁷ The pure materialism of these thinkers “assumes matter itself, and not its phenomena, to be the fundamental and real substance in all ontic forms.” The consequences of this assumption are extended especially to the meaning of death. Voegelin praises Valéry’s joyful acceptance of a completed life-order in which “*tout va sous terre et rentre dans le jeu!*” This sentiment reveals the mystical joy of life born from experiences of a natural order that transcends the human will: “*Le vent se lève! . . . Il faut tenter de vivre!*”⁸ Voegelin takes this poem to express a profundity of spirit that is seldom glimpsed even by the most

⁶ Barry Cooper has gone further to fill this lacuna. In his *Action into Nature*, Cooper relies heavily upon the discussion of phenomenism in Voegelin’s “Last Orientation,” while offering considerably more historical analysis on the breakdown of Christian spirituality than Voegelin provides here. Cooper relates this breakdown to the latest manifestation of phenomenal science: the preoccupation with technology. See Barry Cooper, *Action into Nature* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991), Chapter 3, “Phenomenism.”

⁷ Voegelin first encountered the works of Santayana and Valéry in the late 1920s, as a visiting scholar to the United States and France (Cf. *AR*, 31, 35; and Cooper, *Foundations*, *op. cit.*, 52-4, 110). Schelling also mentions the pure materialism of Lucretius (Cf. *Philosophie der Mythologie*, *Werke* II,2: 90-1).

⁸ Voegelin citing Valéry. Voegelin takes these passages from Valéry’s poem “*Le Cimetière Marin*,” *Nouvelle Revue Française* 81 (1920): 781-87. The poem is named after the place where Valéry had chosen to be buried.

ardent of spiritualists. In Voegelin's words, "the materialist who expects and desires life to end in depersonalization, and nevertheless can accept the game of life with courage and a smile, has sensed more acutely the tension of substance and accident in the life of the spirit than many a spiritualist." The awareness of this tension, and the sense of mystery it evokes, are chiefly what Voegelin finds to be missing in vulgar materialism. But such is the spirit he finds to dominate his age. By contrast, "[t]rue materialism is rare, and the philosophers who turn toward it are among the most distinguished minds of their age" (181, 180).

This is a rare moment of praise in Voegelin's writings. It is not reproduced in any of his published works. Elsewhere he does not celebrate thinkers who expect or claim to desire "depersonalization" after death.⁹ Instead, Voegelin's later writing tends to praise philosophers who cultivate the activity he calls "immortalizing," following Aristotle, the most important pursuit to which humans rightly give their best attentions. In this early text, however, the accent is quite different. Voegelin also praises Schelling for expecting "depersonalization" after death. This is said to be part of what constitutes his "greatness." This praise will seem odd to those who are aware of the extent to which Schelling's later works remain closer to a distinctively Christian soteriology than Voegelin's comments imply. Accordingly, this praise requires some analysis, since it likely reveals more about Voegelin's early understanding of the notion of death than Schelling's. The textual source for this discussion is a relatively early work by Schelling, *The Ages of the World* (1811-). Schelling mentions the likelihood of depersonalization after death. But he does so with the joy of a mystic, rather than the despair of a nihilist. Death, for him, is the personal soul's return to an impersonal God, the only truly selfless state in which no personal relations are possible. Voegelin notes how Schelling's account of the "purest God (the *lauerste Gott*)" is equivalent to the "Nothing"

⁹ Even in his sustained discussion of Santayana from *On the Form of the American Mind*, Voegelin does not offer such high praise for one who faced depersonalization seriously (Cf., *CW* 1: 101-11).

or “supratrinitarian godhead” of the mystics: “the ‘naught and overnaught’ of Angelus Silesius, the ‘unground’ of Jacob Boehme.” When this purest divinity, this “Nothing,” is discovered as the end to which all human desires lead, then salvation from the suffering of existence may be sought properly “in the quiet of being without desire.” The highest activity of the will, therefore, is to will nothing. Voegelin writes, translating Schelling: “‘Such a will is nothing and everything. It is nothing insofar as it neither longs to become active itself, nor longs for any actuality. It is everything because all strength comes from it like from eternal freedom, because it has all things under it, ruling them all and ruled by none’” (234, 235).¹⁰

These points suggest a familiar theme in Christian spirituality: One gains the world by renouncing one’s desires for it (*cf.* Matt. 6:19-33). But the reorientation of desire toward the divine Nothing is much more radical in Schelling’s philosophical mysticism. Voegelin interprets: “The dissolution of existence into this Nothing is ‘the true goal’ of life even in its most violent turmoil of forces. . . . Schelling’s ‘goal’ is not the Christian *summum bonum* of the eternal beatific vision.” He does not write of self-renunciation as a means to personal immortality. Rather, his goal is “a desire for depersonalization into a nirvana” (235). Voegelin finds the manifestation of this desire in Schelling to be especially interesting because it does not come from a direct encounter with Oriental sources—as it does later, for example, in Schopenhauer. Schelling actualizes an “existential possibility” which is “always inherent in Western mysticism,” though typically prevented from taking an independent development by the orthodox Christian environment. Schelling’s mysticism is beyond orthodox Christianity, Voegelin contends. The “Promethean suffering through nature,”

¹⁰ Voegelin citing Schelling, *Die Weltalter, Werke* 1,8: 234-5. In order to avoid awkward introductions to quotations—*e.g.*, “Voegelin writes than Schelling wrote”—I have placed Voegelin’s translations and quotations of Schelling in triple quotation marks and have indicated the text by Schelling in a footnote. Where relevant, all German terms placed in parentheses within quotations have been inserted by Voegelin. In general, the reader of this chapter may presuppose that when something is said about Schelling, it is my attempt to convey Voegelin’s understanding of Schelling’s thought.

on which he finds it to be based, "is a tone of existence that arises *within* Western history but transcends the Augustinian, Christian tensions of *amor Dei* and *amor sui*: it is related to the experience of karma, and it becomes the source, in the nineteenth century, for the understanding openness for Oriental affinities," especially among the Germans (235-6). Schelling's early mysticism, at least, tends to remove all suspicions that the *amor Dei* and restriction of *amor sui* in this life are being used as means to the ulterior end of personal immortality. This is the sense of Voegelin's praise; it also concludes his discussion of mystics who expect or desire depersonalization after death.

Voegelin's early praise of pure materialism is balanced by his admiration for the "non-phenomenal spiritualism" that he finds in Giordano Bruno (1548-1600). He argues that Bruno's speculation on the infinity of the universe reveals the same profundity of spirit that one finds in Lucretius (179). Thus, Bruno and Lucretius—the pure spiritualist and materialist, respectively—reveal that Voegelin's critique of phenomenalism and praise of substantial "realism" is not based upon a simplistic preference for spirit over matter. Rather, it is part of his efforts to clarify the impartial scope of a philosophical science of substance. He is thus able to grant that the thought of a pure materialist "does not imply a negation or even a contempt of the spirit. On the contrary." Voegelin continues, "a great spiritual sensitiveness alone can induce the fatigue of spiritual existence, the disillusionment with its symbols as substances, and their acceptance as aesthetic expressions of the substantial mystery of life." Whether one evokes "spirit" or "matter" as the substance of reality is simply a matter of "choice," Voegelin says, one which is determined by the particular dispensation of sentiments found in particular mystics (180-1, 180). With either choice, the underlying point remains the same: the substantial mystery of life and death may find proper expression only in substantial thinkers who do not seek to avoid one aspect or another of reality as experienced. It is perhaps still surprising, however, that Voegelin should include any type of

materialist in his list of praiseworthy alternatives to scientism. This inclusion will become more intelligible when it becomes possible to analyze Schelling's dynamic account of matter, which Voegelin presupposes here.

After establishing the general type, Voegelin narrows his definition of phenomenism to address the categorical error that occurs in this type of thinking. He focuses on "the complex of sentiments and ideas which cluster around the tendency to interpret the phenomenal relations which are the objects of science as a substantial order of things." He develops a series of technical terms in order to supplement this refocusing of the subject matter. "Phenomenal speculation" is said to result when thinkers fail to perceive, willfully or not, that their scientific claims refer to "phenomenal reality," not the substantial mystery of reality *per se*.¹¹ The creation of a phenomenal reality can have far reaching consequences: "Into phenomenal reality. . . can be projected hopes and fears, and man can enter into experiential relations with it as if it were substantial reality; projections of this type we shall designate as 'phenomenal projections' and their effects on man as 'phenomenal obsessions.' When, finally, man acts on the basis of phenomenal speculation and under the influence of phenomenal obsessions, we shall designate the resulting patterns of conduct and attitudes as 'phenomenal action' and 'phenomenal activism'" (181).

This catalogue of sentiments resembles the study of "pneumopathology" that Voegelin attributed to Schelling. The term "pneumopathology" does not appear in Voegelin's "Last Orientation," despite its detailed analysis of Schelling. But Voegelin addresses the same problem with his analysis of phenomenism. He continues to focus this discussion by turning his attention

¹¹ By the mid-1960s Voegelin replaces "phenomenal reality" with the notion of a "second reality," a phrase he borrows from the Austrian novelists Albert Paris Gütersloh, Robert Musil, and Heimito von Doderer. Voegelin says that this phrase was coined "in order to signify the image of reality created by human beings when they exist in a state of alienation. The principle characteristic of this state of alienation, which is supported by the imaginative construction of second realities in opposition to the reality of experience, is what Doderer has called the 'refusal to apperceive' (*Apperzeptionsverweigerung*)" (AR, 97-8).

to “the first case” in which the problem of phenomenalism attracted the attention of a philosopher—*viz.*, Pascal.

By the middle of the seventeenth century “[t]he advancement of astronomy and physics had gathered sufficient momentum to appeal to broader sections of the educated public and to fascinate men by apparently opening unlimited horizons of knowledge of the external world.” This situation “seem[s] to have been accompanied immediately by the belief that the new science was not simply an instrument for exploring phenomena, but that it offered a key to a new dimension of reality: that, as a result of this new science, our knowledge of man and his place in the cosmos would be materially affected; and that, as a further result, the understanding of man that had been achieved in Christian anthropology would be decisively invalidated” (182). Pascal disagreed. And Voegelin cites his disagreement with approval. In discussion of a lengthy fragment from the *Pensées*, Voegelin contends that, far from supporting the pride and exuberance inspired by the successes of the natural sciences, Pascal correctly argued that the developments of Copernican cosmology should make one aware of one’s relative insignificance and finitude, that one is a creature in the Christian sense of the term (*Ibid.*).¹² Pascal’s insights on the infinity of the universe are supported further by a meditation on the infinity of ever smaller particles extending “below” human consciousness—where the imagination is said to find “a further infinity of universes, each with its firmaments, its planets, its earth, in the same proportions as the visible world” (183).

To Voegelin, this insight reveals a great deal about any human being’s actual place in the universal order of things, though this condition is known best by the philosopher: “As a consequence of his imagination in the two dimensions of the universe, he will find himself suspended between the abysses of the maximum and of the nothing; his curiosity will change to admiration, and he will

¹² Voegelin refers to aphorism #72 of the *Pensées* (Brunschvicg edition); I.xv.199 in A. J. Krailsheimer’s Penguin edition (pp. 88ff.).

be more disposed to contemplate in silence than to search with presumption." This is, for Voegelin and Pascal, the appropriate response to the new cosmology: to exchange curiosity for admiration and to live suspended in truth between the "abysses." However, in Voegelin's account of the matter, Pascal's advice is not taken by his contemporaries. Instead, a different type of suspense prevails: the suspension of substantial truth, yielding in its turn an exploration of nature that is pursued with "temerity" (*Ibid.*). This suspension of substantial truth results in the cultivation of three types of phenomenalism: the biological, the economic, and the psycho-logical. The combination of these types reveals what Voegelin takes to be the distinguishing spirit of modernity.

Biological Phenomenalism: Evolution

Biological phenomenalism is singled out for special attention by Voegelin. It is manifested chiefly by theorists who mistake evolution for substantial science. The public success of this mistake begins in the nineteenth century and is a great source of bewilderment for Voegelin. He argues that eighteenth-century biological theory had already treated thoroughly the evolution of life forms. It abandoned creational accounts of species and conceived the idea of a chronological succession of living forms from the most primitive to the most complex. The increase in knowledge that this hypothesis allowed was even acknowledged openly. More importantly, however, the insight was also gained, especially by Kant, that evolutionary thinking did not bring us any closer to understanding the fundamental mystery of the substantial life that evolves. "The chain of evolutionary forms as a whole was just as much of an ultimate datum in ontology as previously had been the single species." Neither was the problem changed by speculative prolongations of the chain into inorganic matter, nor the attempt to have organic matter arise out of inorganic matter. "Such speculations simply meant pushing the mystery of the potentiality which unfolded morphologically in time a step farther back without understanding it any better. In the end we would always be faced by the two fundamental ontological questions of Leibniz: Why is there something, why not nothing?"

and: Why is the something as it is?" Evolutionary thinking does not address these substantial questions, pertaining respectively to the essence and existence of life forms. Kant understood this problem and, according to Voegelin, reduced evolutionary thought to its "phenomenal proportions" (184).¹³

Remarkably, and as though the limits of evolutionary thought had not already been established in theoretical science, a new phenomenal opinion of evolution appeared in the nineteenth century, this time as Evolution capitalized. This opinion operated with the well-known conceptions of the struggle for life, the survival of the fittest, natural selection, etc. Evolution "had a popular success and became a mass-creed for the semi-educated. A theory which, assuming that it was empirically tenable, could at best furnish an insight into the mechanics of evolution without touching its substance, was accepted as a revelation concerning the nature of life, and as compelling a reorientation of our views concerning the nature of man and his position in the cosmos." The resurgence of evolutionary fervor is especially important to Voegelin because it is symptomatic of "the critical split in the history of the Western mind between the narrowing main line along which the problems of substance move and the phenomenal mass-movements which increasingly dominate the public scene and produce the moral and intellectual confusion of our time" (184-5, 185).

Voegelin refers to Darwin as one of the principle causes of the mistake that takes phenomenal relations—the evolving chain of life forms—to be the true basis for a substantial account of reality. His confusions in this respect contributed greatly to the creation of Evolution as a "mass-creed." To be sure, Voegelin grants that "Darwin was a great empirical biologist who marshaled convincingly the materials in support of his theory." Darwin made significant contributions to a

¹³ Voegelin's appeal to Kant's understanding of the limitations of evolutionary thought is based on passages from the *Kritik der Urteilskraft* (§§ 80ff.). Voegelin refers to these sections in a public talk in 1977. See "Structures in Consciousness," Zdravko Planinc, ed., *Voegelin Research News* 2/3 (1996); also *Conversations*, 146; "Autobiographical Statement at Age Eighty-Two," *op. cit.*, 117-18.

relatively new realm of knowledge. "At the same time," Voegelin warns, "neither Darwin nor his followers were the best of theorists, so that the issue between phenomenal and substantial knowledge could remain relatively obscure." This confusion, in addition, is symptomatic of a more general problem that begins to emerge in nineteenth-century thought: "with the increasing specialization of the sciences, scholars who are impeccable as masters of their field become unable to see the theoretical problems of their special science in proper relation to the problems of ontology and metaphysics. . . . [T]he will to understand man as having his position in a world-immanent order revealed by a science of phenomena, instead of in a transcendental order revealed by the *cognitio fidei*, is the dynamic factor in the transformation" (185-6).

Voegelin attaches a lengthy footnote to this passage, explaining why the aforementioned transformation is theoretically unsound. He stresses that one may accept the evolution of living forms, with its culmination in human beings, without thereby committing oneself to the intramundane, phenomenal anthropology that is assumed to follow therefrom. Substantive anthropological claims pertaining to what a substance is simply do not follow from phenomenal descriptions of how a substance changes in time. Accordingly, Voegelin claims that evolutionary theory poses no necessary conflict, "so dear to the heart of fundamentalists, with Christian doctrine." In support of this claim he calls attention to the sixteenth-century anthropology of Paracelsus, where he finds a biological interpretation of humanity based on Genesis, "which solves the problem raised by the theory of evolution on the level of a theory of substances." Paracelsus assumes that creation took place in two steps. First, God created the substance of all things out of nothing; he did this by his "word." For Voegelin, the notion of a *creatio ex nihilo* properly evokes the mystery of the beginning of all life forms. It is the substantial point missing in evolutionary science, though it purports to be a complete account of reality. The Christian *nihilo* does not "answer" all of our questions in order to make our knowledge of natural phenomena complete. Quite to the contrary,

it reminds us that the unknowable beginning of life always leaves our knowledge of it substantially incomplete, or, what amounts to the same, substantially mysterious. In a second step, Paracelsus says that God created humanity by extracting what was “most subtle and best” from “all creatures in heaven and earth.” God then contracted this substance into a “*massa*” out of which humanity was made as a “microcosm” of all that exists. Voegelin acknowledges that Paracelsus is “yet unacquainted with the unfolding of the forms of life in time.” But he argues that the addition of a temporal element does not touch the principle with which a substantial anthropology needs to be concerned: the order of human being has its origin in divine reality and the demiurgic processes which make us a “microcosm” of all that exists (186 n. 6).¹⁴ For Voegelin, to acknowledge the horizon of divine mystery surrounding phenomenal knowledge completes the tensional aspect in all substantially human knowing. That is to say, the knowledge of one’s ignorance is the better part of science.

The limits of evolutionary thought were known to a small group of substantially minded theorists long before Evolution became a mass-creed for “semi-educated” progressivists in the nineteenth century. However, a nearly complete disregard for theoretical science allowed Evolution to take hold as a pseudo-religious movement. This meant that its central doctrines could be absorbed, furthermore, into the interpretation of society and politics. The idea of natural selection could “fortify the belief that the successful man is the better man, that success is fated in the order of nature, and that the order created by success is a right order because it is willed by nature—irrespective of the moral and spiritual issues involved.” To the biological conception of Evolution is then added a “theory of racial differentiation,” which fosters a reinterpretation of history and politics along the lines of superior and inferior races, those who are destined to rule or to be

¹⁴ Voegelin’s analysis of Paracelsus is based on primary quotations from *Erklärung der ganzen astronomey*, in *Werke*, ed. Sudhoff, I Abteilung, Band 10, (Munich and Berlin, 1928), 648ff.

ruled. It is thus thought possible, to a remarkable extent, to circumvent moral and spiritual objections to the new science by appealing to evolutionary doctrines as having attained the substantive knowledge of reality and its order. Consequently, "[t]he substance of man and society is overlaid with a coat of biological phenomena which smothers the spiritual and moral awareness and tends to replace the spiritual order of society by an order of biological survival. The phenomenal order of life becomes a phenomenal obsession when it is erected into a rule for action" (186, 187).

With biological phenomenism established as the principle type, Voegelin proceeds to a comparatively succinct account of phenomenism in its economic and psychological manifestations, both of which are considered as branches of the principle type.

Economic Phenomenism: Liberalism

Economic phenomenism works with the following assumptions: Individuals in society are concerned primarily with financial matters, guided by self-interest, calculative reasoning and the attending assumption that ratio-economic actions in the multitude will yield an abundance of wealth for the whole society. The possibility of unlimited capital gain will not become problematic as long as everyone is extended an equal opportunity for such gain. Even if these assumptions are valid, Voegelin argues that "nothing follows from them concerning the desirability of a society with a legal order which favors unhampered rational, economic action." This observation reminds him of the problems that once concerned substantial economic theorists, problems such as "whether there are not a few things more important for man and his life in society than a maximum equipment with goods, and whether an economic order which produces a maximum of wealth is worth the cost in values that have perhaps to be sacrificed in order to maintain it." Voegelin does not expect the study of economic phenomena to address these concerns immediately; its initial task is merely to report on the status of economic matters. This type of study becomes problematic, however, when other

substantial concerns are declared by economists to be invalid, perhaps as merely private “value-judgments.” When this assumption proliferates, “the theoretical system of economic relations is considered a right [objective] order of society which should not be disturbed by interventions” (187). Once again, this situation results in “the atrophy of moral awareness.” People become willing “to accept the evils which may arise from the translation of phenomenal relations into a substantially obligatory order as inconveniences of the short run to be compensated by the ultimate gains in the long run.” The economic phenomenalist creates a society in his own image, a “consumer” society, and “overlooks the fact that man is not simply an absorbent of goods but a being whose status is determined in relation to the whole of society” (188).

Voegelin observes that the totalitarian revolutions of the twentieth-century, Communist as well as National Socialist, “have as one of their components the desire to break the liberal economic obsession and to evolve a new substantial order.” But he argues that these movements alike fall prey to a different obsession, “the new phenomenals of planning.” In substantial economic theory, a plan is a response to concerns arising in a substantial order of society. This order is not completely fabricated by social contractors, but articulated as part of the common life and concerns shared by all humans in the society. This order is the precondition without which the idea of planning is empty. In the revolutionary movements, however, Voegelin finds “the same tendency as in liberalism to erect the plan into an absolute order and to treat the individual as a function of the plan.” Totalitarian saviors initially seem to have a firm understanding of the common weal, but they eventually treat the individual with “even greater brutality than [in] phenomenal liberalism.” For example, Voegelin credits Marx for his initially keen sense of the problem of economic phenomenism in nineteenth-century politics. He finds Marx’s awareness of the problem in the “solid empirical truth” that sustains his attack on bourgeois society. Marx wrote at a time when “liberal phenomenism [*i.e.*, capitalism] was at the height of its development, and the order of

economic relations had in the age of the Industrial Revolution, indeed, acquired the obsessional character which made it an effective determinant of society." By the end of the seventeenth century, for example in Locke's *Treatise on Civil Government*, a broader notion of social obligations had completely given way to an obsession with "the procedural protection of property" as the basis for political order. Locke assured his readers, somehow "without arousing ridicule and revulsion," that "the poverty of the poor would be protected by the law with the same impartiality as the wealth of the rich." He could offer this assurance, Voegelin continues, because his work "tacitly presupposed the substantially existing English political society" in which class mobility was not to be expected. By the nineteenth century, however, "[t]he very arguments which Locke used in defense of property society appear with Marx as instruments of the attack on an order that had become largely phenomenal and thereby destructive of the moral and spiritual substance of society." Locke could seem even more phenomenalist than he perhaps was because the German Marx lacked the presupposition of "an articulated political society," which Voegelin finds guiding Locke's defense. Thus, Marx took Locke's defense to be entirely phenomenal or substantially empty. That is, he took it to be an ideology.

Voegelin argues that the Marxian concept of ideology is "useless as a basic category for the interpretation of society." It, too, works with phenomenal assumptions that attempt erroneously to restrict or replace the spiritual substance of actual humans with abstract determining agents. Even so, Voegelin grants that the concept of ideology "has nevertheless caught for the special case, with great empirical perspicacity, the atrophy of substance under pressure of the economic obsession" (189). Some of Marx's suspicions were basically correct. Ideology is a type of phenomenism, or "false consciousness." But he failed to take into account the phenomenalist assumptions in his own account of society. For example, Voegelin rejects Marx's general theory of society, due to its central claim that "the legal and civilizational order of a society is the 'superstructure' over the

fundamental economic order, or that the substantial order of society is a function of the economic order." This claim, taken by itself, would amount to "the misinterpretation of society at the hands of a phenomenalist" (188-9). It would assume that society is based upon a substantially empty economic order, rather than the spiritual substance by which it is truly sustained, according to Voegelin. To the extent that Marx held this assumption, Voegelin rejects his socio-economic theory. However, Voegelin also grants that there was more to Marx than his theoretical confusions, something more to the man which allowed for his sensible complaint to emerge against social injustice in the first place: "philosophy and science are not all in life. Marx was a dubious philosopher, and his empiricism while shrewd in focus was limited in horizon, but he was a prophet of Israel who put his curse on the doers of evil and held out a new faith to the oppressed and created a people unto him" (239 n. 74). This may appear to be little more than a satirical attack, drawing upon the quasi-religious nature of Marx's politics. But this is not so. Rather, Voegelin wishes to portray Marx as a failed prophet, as one who could not rise above the spiritual confusions of his age.

Marx's phenomenism comes out strongest, for Voegelin, in his sweeping dismissal of religion as the "opium of the people." Voegelin partially accepts the point that Marx attempts to make in this phrase. But he limits its validity to one of several possible manifestations of religious consciousness in society. He turns to Schelling as a better guide in this matter. Schelling advanced a similar critique of bourgeois religion, but he did so without the extreme assumption that all religion is merely a ruse for the concealment of petty self-interests:

On occasion of the question whether a system of moral rules can be established independently of religious experience, Schelling criticizes the idea that God can be deduced as a necessary postulate of morality. In particular he reflects on the people "who have a habit of looking at everything from an economic point of view. God is for them a home medicine that everybody can use for himself in order to fortify his morality, which it costs much trouble to keep up. This idea is in no way better than the opinion held by high-placed

persons and so-called statesmen that the belief in God is a good thing to restrain the people and to support a rotten and cracking machinery of government" (238).¹⁵

Voegelin understands Schelling to be castigating the same evil that provoked Marx to his famous dismissal of religion. But Schelling is thought better able to separate phenomenal abuses from the substantial reality that may come to light in experiences of a religious nature: "For Schelling, religion *is* not an opium of the people but it is *used* as a house medicine by individuals as well as by statesmen. Marx, for his part, commits the gross blunder of mistaking a phenomenal misuse for the substance of faith." Schelling is thus better able to clarify the problem. He proceeds by denying "that there is such a thing as a morality of man at all. . . . The very word morality is a product of newfangled enlightenment; in reality there is only virtue, *virtus*, a divine quality of the soul, but no morality which the individual could give to itself as an individual, or of which it could pride itself" (238).¹⁶ In a few sentences, Voegelin argues that Schelling is able to stigmatize the phenomenal misuse of religion while, beyond Marx, revealing its source in Enlightenment attempts to reduce God to the status of a moralistic political convenience. "Schelling opposes to such destruction the idea of existential virtue, suggesting in its Christian version the Hellenic *areté*. Marx, on the other hand, has to implement his phenomenalistic mistake by throwing the substance of Christian civilization overboard and indulging in a perspective of revolutionary action that is supposed to restore by changes in the phenomenal sphere of institutions a 'goodness' of man that only can grow through the *metanoia* [mental transformation] of the person. The spiritual realist [Schelling] is not only the better philosopher, he is also the better empirical scientist" (239). Schelling offers a better attempt to account for the substance of Christian civilization in his philosophy of history and does not entertain fantastic hopes that the eradication of human ills could ever come about through

¹⁵ Voegelin citing Schelling, *System der gesamten Philosophie, Werke* I,6: 557.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

political activity oriented toward the future. Schelling, like Voegelin, longs for an ultimate transformation of human suffering beyond time.

Psychological Phenomenalism: Projection Psychologies

Psychological phenomenalism is the last singular type that Voegelin discusses. He says it is not based simply on "theoretical" points, discussed only by specialists, but describes the general spirit in modern society. Voegelin begins his discussion, nonetheless, by listing the principle forms of phenomenal psychology as they are practiced by specialists: "We have an experimental, physiological psychology which has lost the spiritual substance of man entirely; we have furthermore a behavioristic psychology in which actions of the mind have become 'language behaviors' and ideas are 'thought materials'; and we have a depth psychology in which the soul is reduced to an economy of sex quanta and their sublimation" (189-90). These types have one thing in common: they seek to control and manipulate the desires of individuals as members of a mass-market society, rather than chiefly to understand and live with the substantially unchangeable aspect of the *psyche* in the broader context of life and death. For phenomenal psychologists, all matters of the soul are taken to be mere appearances, perhaps even epiphenomena, lacking any substance which could not be controlled by the most charming and ambitious of psycho-political entrepreneurs:

We live in a world of name-brands, soaps, cigarettes, men of authority and distinction who drink choice brands of whiskey, of must-readings, best-sellers, body odors and irresistible perfumes for special occasions; of leaders, movie-stars, big shots, educators and war-criminals; of third realms, perpetual peaces and unconditional surrenders. . . . of unprecedented bomb-loads and speeches; of historical meetings; of adjustment, conditioning, education and reeducation; of propaganda and counter-propaganda; of complexes, balked dispositions, frustrations and gratifications; of centuries of progress, of the child, of the common man, and what not. In brief: we have created a modern demonology by the side of which a medieval catalogue of angels and demons looks a trifle shabby (190).

Anything conceivable seems to be possible in the virtual realities of phenomenal psychologists. There is no natural or divine substance of humanity which could not be altered to suit the wishes of someone with greater power. That which formerly was called human nature is really nothing but

human habits, and these can be changed at will. Thus speaks the phenomenal psychologist. “Under the impact of psychologies of this type the life of the spirit, with its operation of substance on substance, tends to become dissolved into a manifold of manageable causal relations” (*Ibid.*). When phenomenal psychologists acknowledge the spiritual substance of humanity at all, it is typically described—from Feuerbach to Freud—as though it were of strictly human origin. Most speech about the divine is thus explained as the “projection” of an autonomous “self.” Religious projection is typically dismissed as naive projection, where a human projector mistakes part of his or her own self as a fictitiously divine transcendence. From the Schellingian perspective Voegelin develops here, this explanation of the divine-human relation is based upon what needs to be described as a closed projection psychology. Schelling also speaks of the divine as a projection of the human soul, as we see in the next section. However, in contrast to the closed type, his projection psychology must be described as open.¹⁷

The central differences between these types can be described clearly, though their consequences are extensive and have proved difficult to maintain for what is perhaps the majority of modern psychologists: the closed type tends to ignore or depreciate the human soul’s relation to the rest of reality as experienced; the open type stresses the soul’s substantial identity with the life (*psyche*) of the cosmos. The closed type is threatened by the extreme of uncritical solipsism, the open type by uncritical mysticism. The closed type tends to leave modern notions of personal identity relatively unexamined, assuming that the human ego is the fundamental ground of all reality; it is possessive of the ego and everything it claims to know. The open type questions the

¹⁷ This distinction reflects a similar point that Voegelin often makes with reference to Henri Bergson, one of the participants named in Voegelin’s account of the “Schelling-Renaissance.” In *Les Deux Sources de la morale et de la religion* (Paris, 1932), Bergson distinguishes between *l’âme close* and *l’âme ouverte*, reflecting what Voegelin describes as the respective orientations of phenomenal and substantial psychology (*cf.* *Anam.*, 18, 98, 195f.; *CW* 12: 119-20, 72-3).

primacy of the ego, discovers this notion to be irrational, and finds it necessary to qualify the language of possession by symbolizing the human soul as but a part of reality—as a participant in the relatively transcendent order of the cosmos (in which it is immersed and by which it is comprehended). The language of participation thus challenges the possessive character of scientific, ego-based psychology and “transcendental” phenomenology.

The Combination of Types

We have arrived at a better understanding of what informs Voegelin’s critique of modernity as a mass-creed society of phenomenologists: the combination of biological, economic and psychological types of phenomenism. Anything appears to be possibly actual in phenomenal reality. Here one is limited only by imagination. And one is encouraged to make one’s dreams a reality. Voegelin takes the relatively recent proliferation of phenomenal reality even to have yielded its own genre of literature—not myth, nor a Gospel narrative, but science fiction: “With Mrs. Shelley’s *Frankenstein* opens a world of scientific monsters and adventures, of split personalities, of time-machines, of travels to the Moon and to Mars, of travels around the world and under the sea and to the center of the earth.” Voegelin names Edgar Allan Poe, Louis Stevenson, Jules Verne, Curt Lasswitz, and H.G. Wells as additional representatives of the science fiction movement. This movement is of interest to Voegelin because “a point seems to have been reached where fictional imagination shades off into genuine phenomenal obsession.” For example, he relates an initially amusing story about science fiction achieving “[t]he fusion of fictional imagination and phenomenal obsession.” The incident in question occurred when a panic broke out on the occasion of Orson Welles’ broadcast of *Invasion from Mars*. Some adult members of his audience believed the fictional invasion to be real. They could believe in such a thing “because they lived in a phenomenal world in which invasions from Mars are something to be expected in the same manner in which the appearance of a demon with claws and a tail was something to be expected in the world of a

medieval demonologist.” This confusion was not restricted to the popular level. Among those who believed in the invasion were two geologists from Princeton, well-educated men who “set out heroically to investigate the invasion at risk of their lives—as it befits true scientists” (191). At first, Voegelin says, he did not consider the matter closely. He was thus under the impression that the geologists had mistaken the invasion for the report of a real military invasion by some foreign power. “That would have been crazy enough,” he continues. “But I remember still the cold horror that gripped me when I read Mr. Cantril’s analysis of the panic and realized that the hearers had understood the invasion from Mars quite correctly as coming from Mars and acted on this conviction. I understood on this occasion the depth of the madness in which we live” (191 n. 9).

To point out that some of the feats imagined by science fiction have been accomplished since Voegelin wrote these words—*e.g.*, lunar landings, the placement of expensive robots on Mars and beyond—would be to miss the substantial point he attempts to make. Voegelin warns that the realm of technical achievement “is becoming increasingly phenomenal and acquiring obsessional characteristics insofar as it tempts man to translate into reality what can be done by technical means without regard for the consequences in the realm of a substantial order.” We are increasingly tempted to think that “what can be done, should be done”—simply because the erosion of substantive insight and discussion has made it difficult to offer persuasive reasons why some things ought not to be done. This situation has had well-known political consequences. We now have the technical ability to transplant and destroy entire populations, to machine-gun fleeing civilians, terror-bomb entire countries, and create highly efficient extermination camps. The tools of war have ceased to be relatively simple instruments of execution “in the service of substantial purposes” and have gained “a momentum of their own which bends the purposes to the technical possibilities.” Voegelin finds the starkest manifestation of this transformation in National Socialist techniques of extermination. He sees “a most intimate connection between the comic strip and the concentration

camp. The man who runs away from an invasion from Mars because the comic strip and the broadcast have decomposed his personality, and the SS man who garrotes a prisoner without compunction because he is dead to the meaning of his action in the order of spiritual reality, are brothers under the skin." Liberal democrats may or may not become squeamish at this notion, depending on the extent to which they have accepted technology as a beneficent creator of reality. But Voegelin's point remains the same: the habits of phenomenistic thinking, so to speak, lobotomize one's capacity for theoretical apperceptions of substantial reality. In Voegelin's words: "Phenomenalism has gone farther towards transforming our society into the combination of a slaughterhouse with a booby hatch than many contemporaries are still sane enough to realize." This condemnation is perhaps harsh. But one suspects that it would have been harsher if it were written only slightly later. In a postscript to this chapter, Voegelin adds that he finished this section of his work six weeks before the atomic bomb was dropped on Hiroshima, "the date that has brought us one step nearer to the point where reality and comic-strip become indistinguishable" (191-2).

Individual personalities have decomposed and Western civilization has all but disintegrated. This is how Voegelin understands the spiritual situation from which he turns to Schelling as one who provides the last stable point of philosophical orientation, immediately before and potentially beyond the "century of crisis." Voegelin draws upon Schelling's theoretical philosophy for his conception of natural order, and Schelling's practical philosophy guides his understanding of the changing ways in which nature manifests itself in history and politics.

2. RECOVERING THE SUBSTANCE OF PHILOSOPHY: "SCHELLINGIAN REALISM"

The preceding characterization of modernity has outlined the historical context from which Voegelin is led to praise Schelling as "one of the greatest philosophers of all times" (198). In his unpublished estimation, Voegelin commends Schelling for cultivating an extraordinary spiritual sensitivity, one

which effectively recovers the philosophical substance of reality during an age of phenomenal obsessions. Schelling rises above the confusions of his time and prepares the way for others, such as Voegelin himself, to do the same. How does this come about? Taking Voegelin at his word, one would have to say that he understands the cause of Schelling's greatness to be rooted in an historically new revelation. It is especially Schelling's account of reality as a unified nexus of substantially divine potentials becoming actualized in the order of human consciousness and its history, the teaching known as the *Potenzenlehre*, that Voegelin describes as "the creation of new religious symbols." To Voegelin, Schelling's thought "establishes a new level of consciousness in Western intellectual history in general and in the history of political thought in particular." It brings to a close the classic age of modern philosophy from Descartes to Hegel, "and by virtue of this achievement it becomes of increasing importance in a time of crisis as the point of orientation for those who wish to gain a solid foothold in the surrounding mess of decadent traditions, conflicting eschatologies, phenomenal speculation and obsessions, ideologies and creeds. . . and orgiastic destructions" (211, 236, 242).

Despite the occasionally enthusiastic tone in his account of Schelling's greatness, Voegelin traces Schelling's recovery of substantial philosophy along three distinct lines. First, Schelling's philosophy of consciousness returns behind Descartes to Giordano Bruno: it replaces the Cartesian dualism of mind and matter with a critically tutored version of Bruno's meditations on the substantial identity of what these terms represent. Second, Schelling's philosophy of history returns behind Hegel to Kant: reflective consciousness is shown to be incapable of producing the historically mediated unity of mind and matter, spirit and nature, as proclaimed at the end of Hegel's historiography. Finally, Schelling's political philosophy returns for its paradigmatic notion of the state behind the secularized power-state of the French Revolution to the spiritual tension between public and private life in the Greek *polis*. In all of this retrospection, Voegelin does not find

Schelling's thought to be that of a conservative reactionary, but to yield the recovery of a persuasively philosophical science of order and history. The need for retrospection can be clarified by turning to Voegelin's summary account of Schelling's history of modern philosophy.

According to Voegelin, Schelling discovers nothing substantial in most of modern philosophy. Kant's thought is the only exception to this general claim. Aside from this exception, Schelling interprets the vast majority of modern philosophy as "a great aberration," one which has discernable "stages of decomposition of an initially vitiated system," namely, that of Bruno. The decomposition begins when Descartes splits the universe into mind and matter: "On the one hand we have the meditative investigation of the ego; on the other a mechanistic theory of matter. The substantial unity of the world is lost in the dualism of mind and dead matter." Spinoza attempts to heal Cartesian dualism by accounting for the unity of mind and matter in "a fundamental substance (God)." He then conceives mind and matter as the thinking and extended modes of this fundamental substance. Schelling has "great respect" for this attempt, mainly "because it points in the right direction." But he ultimately considers it a failure, "because the identification is mechanical only and does not show matter and mind as the moments or stages in the process of a living substance (as did Bruno)" (200, 200-01). After Spinoza's failed attempt, the serious decomposition begins. This manifests itself initially in "the opposing positions of Leibnizian idealism and a position which Schelling calls hylozoism."

Leibniz attempted to transcend Cartesian dualism by "abolishing being altogether and by interpreting reality as representation (*Vorstellung*)." The reality of bodies was preserved by thinking of them as "representational powers (*Vorstellkräfte*) independent of our own knowledge and thought." But this move left unresolved the body's relation to the representing mind. It left open the possibility of a counter position, which one might expect to find in some type of materialism.

Schelling's "hylozoism" is a variant of this counter-position. Hylozoism "is supposed to be a metaphysical position that uses the other of the two Spinozistic modes [*i.e.*, the extended mode] as the absolute substance but preserves the mind by assuming matter to be animated." Voegelin finds this position to be "a bit suspect." He says that Schelling does not ascribe it to any historical philosopher but only "mentions on occasion that it was inspired by Bruno." This leaves Voegelin to suspect that it was constructed "as a position contemporary with Leibniz in order to have [Schelling's] ideal type of philosophical decomposition complete." But such was not the case. The editors of this volume of Voegelin's *Collected Works* have found "hylozoism" described already in the late seventeenth century by the Cambridge Platonist Ralph Cudworth; and Schelling himself does clearly ascribe it to Bruno.¹⁸ Voegelin's conjecture arises because he is thinking thematically, rather than strictly chronologically. Thus Voegelin completes his account of the decomposition by having Fichte's transcendental idealism flow from the idealism of Leibniz, and French materialism from hylozoism.¹⁹

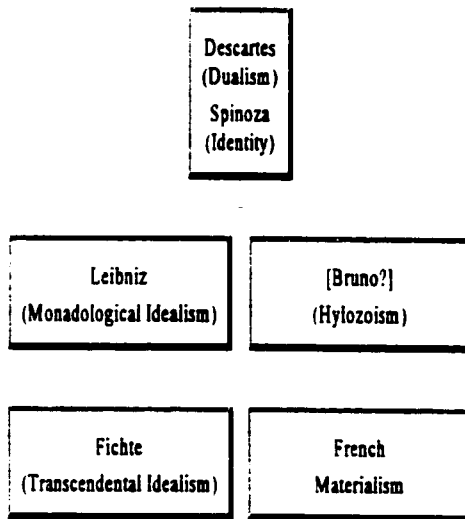
Each of these positions attempts to account for the unity of reality by choosing either spirit or matter as the substantial term to which the other is subordinated or by which it is denied outright (*cf.* Table 2.i). The branch of idealism was especially problematic for Schelling. Particularly in Fichte's thought, Schelling saw a trend becoming explicit which had been growing in importance for some time in the sciences, arts, and public life in general. This trend is the gradual attempt to empty Christianity of all notions of strength, a problem that determined much in Schelling's critique

¹⁸ The editors have found "hylozoism" in Cudworth's *The True Intellectual System of the Universe* (1678):*CW* 25: 201 n. 3. And Schelling ascribes this position to Bruno, among others, in his *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen* (*Werke* I,7: 444) and *Die Weltalter* (*Werke* I,8: 342).

¹⁹ Voegelin says that his understanding of Schelling's account of the history of modern philosophy is based on "a fusion of two accounts given by Schelling" in his *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen* (1810) and *Weltalter* (1811-) (*Cf.* "LO," 201 n. 4). A more concise source for Schelling's account of this decomposition is found in *Zur Geschichte der neueren Philosophie* (early-1830s, *Werke* I,10).

of modernity. According to Voegelin, Schelling complained that “the age would be satisfied only by a God from whose concept had been taken away everything that is power and strength—a God whose highest expression of life is thinking and knowing, and a world in which he schematizes emptily himself; a world that is only image, and indeed image of the image, a nothing of the nothing, a shadow of the shadow.” Voegelin credits Schelling with recognizing that the enfeebled God is reflected by an enfeebled humanity. Good-natured moderns in the endeavor for “so-called enlightenment” have succeeded “in dissolving everything in thought.” They have become enlightened idealists. However, like their God of the pure concept, this has made them “nothing but images, and dreams of shadows.” Voegelin recognizes in this language the humanity of

Table 2.i



“phenomenalists in their world of phenomenal obsession and actions.” These people have indeed succeeded in dispelling the darkness of former ages, “but with the darkness [they] have also lost all strength. . . . that *barbarous* principle that must be conquered but not annihilated in order to preserve the foundation of all greatness and beauty” (202).

In these words, Voegelin sees an initial formulation of Nietzsche’s assertion that “God is dead.” According to Voegelin’s reading of Schelling, this notion means that “God is not living in the men of the age.” Their “thinking and knowing God” has replaced broader accounts of the living God. Consequently, the people of this age reduce themselves and the world around them to “an ‘empty schematizing’ of God.” These words also remind Voegelin of the attacks on spiritually-impotent humanity in Kierkegaard’s account of middle-class Christianity, Marx’s account of religion, and the

way that Nietzsche and Stefan George denounce the “last man” and “lämmer (lambs).” Before these well-known criticisms of modernity, Schelling had already lamented the greatness and beauty of humanity reduced to “humanitarian feelings without strength and character.” And Voegelin admires his perspicacity: “for only in our time has the destructiveness of the optimistic belief in the goodness of man been revealed to the full. Today we know: when the ‘barbarous principle’ is annihilated phenomenally instead of conquered, it will break out in its unconquered nakedness and destroy the world of the good-natured, enlightened, reasonable, very moral, and civilized people—but unfortunately not only *their* world” (203). Voegelin looks to Schelling as a fellow critic of modernity. Schelling is able to regain a proper sense of humanity’s greatness and beauty without falling prey to the phenomenal disregard for evil in Enlightenment anthropologies. Schelling’s realism in this respect originates in his ability to regard the meaning of concrete experience higher than its interpretation in society.

Order: Schelling’s Philosophical Anthropology

Schelling attempts to recover an uncommonly broad notion of experience as the basis of his philosophical anthropology. In Schelling, Voegelin finds that “[a]nthropology is now systematically made the key to speculation [*i.e.*, philosophical meditation]; nothing must enter into the content of speculation that cannot be found in human nature, in its depths as well as in its heights, in the limitation of its existence as well as in its openness to transcendent reality.” Schelling “does not return to a Christian ontology, nor to the pneumatocentric anthropology: he returns to the speculative task of constructing the universe as an intelligible whole with the means that can be found in the nature of man” (210, 205). Although rooted in the senses, Schelling argues that the nature of human experience is more than merely sensual. He claims that the divinity of nature and its eternal freedom are also matters of concrete experience. Furthermore, these notions can be symbolized both mythically and rationally—all without idealism. But Voegelin focuses on Schelling’s rational

philosophy and the ontology to which it is intimately related, since these are taken to be more proper to Schelling's historical situation and the greatest allies in his critique of modernity.

Schelling's recovery of substantial philosophy transcends what Voegelin refers to as the "philosophical dilettantism" of his day. The dilettantes to whom Voegelin alludes were famous thinkers with followers—*e.g.*, Voltaire, Darwin, and Marx. These men, in Voegelin's account, all tended to confuse phenomenal and substantial aspects of reality, usually by pitting religion and science against one another. Their often polemical stances against spiritual matters had great success. However, once again, Voegelin stresses that a phenomenal belief—for example, when Evolution is mistaken for substantive science—does not become true simply because it is accepted on a mass scale. Popularity, even within the intelligentsia, is no measure of philosophical truth, since things are not what they are by a majority decision. These basic points tend to be forgotten, he argues, by those who produce the mass creeds of phenomenalism. What results is the breakdown of a common philosophical language, indeed, the publicity of reason itself. The civilization where humans once attempted to live with their differences in a common world becomes fragmented as charismatic leaders break away from rational scrutiny in attempts to create their own "communities." This situation is unnecessary, Voegelin contends, where reason holds sway over public discourse. He stresses that people may "differ profoundly in their sentiments and attitudes and still live in the same universe of discourse." But when philosophy degenerates into uncritical opining,

[t]he common philosophical language begins to break down, and with it the possibility of men understanding each other across the differences of sentiments and attitudes. Moreover, with the difficulties of understanding increases the unwillingness to discuss rationally at all, and the various creed communities begin to move each in its own vacuum of discourse. The breakdown of the common language has various causes, and the cause that we are isolating in this context is only one of them, but it is a highly important one: we mean the increasing philosophical dilettantism A not inconsiderable part of the intellectual confusion of our time, with its bitterness and irreconcilable hatreds between democrats and Fascists, Communists and liberals, is due to the fact that the philosophical dilettantes run amok (194-5).

Beyond the vacuous communities of his day, each focusing exclusively on a preferred stratum of reality, Voegelin praises Schelling for attempting to let the various strata of reality be what they are, regardless of how this may offend members of the different "creed communities." As part of this effort, he also praises Schelling for recovering a properly spiritual understanding of reason. First, Schelling recovers what Voegelin calls a "sound ontology."²⁰ Schelling's ontological thought attempts to allow matter and spirit to be what they are substantially. According to Voegelin, it successfully transcends the dilettantic character of phenomenalism, rejecting all attempts to reduce matter or spirit to something non-substantial. Unless such reductive assumptions can be overcome, the common language of philosophical discourse will remain helplessly confused:

If the realms of being are not distinguished properly, if they are not recognized each in its peculiar substance and structure, if spirit is construed as an epiphenomenon of matter, or matter of spirit, if the operations of the spirit are reduced to psychological relations or explained as the sublimation of instincts, or as the effects of an economic or social situation or of racial determinants, discourse ceases to be rational, because by the principle of epiphenomenal construction the various ontic realms are distorted in their own structure as well as in their relations to each other, and because consequently things are not called by their names but by the names of things of another realm.

The solution to this confusion is to be found in "the representation of reality by language symbols that follow the stratification of being, without any attempts at applying the symbols for the phenomena in one realm of being to the phenomena of another realm" (195). Voegelin finds an important example of this solution in Schelling's *Potenzenlehre*; this is the "sound ontology" to which he refers. Voegelin celebrates this teaching as "perhaps the profoundest piece of philosophical thought ever elaborated" (208). But his account of it is remarkably brief, comprising only one and a half pages.²¹ Voegelin says that the details of the *Potenzenlehre* are not his primary

²⁰ "Ontology" is not the best term for what might be described as Schelling's gradational pantheism, since his ontological thought also describes "non-being" at the heart of divine nature and "eternal freedom beyond being" as two of its relational terms. As long as these points are kept in mind, Voegelin's conventional use of the term "ontology" will not create the mistaken impression that Schelling was an "essentialist."

²¹ I devote further discussion to interpreting the symbols of the *Potenzenlehre* in Chapter 4.

concern. Rather, he is more concerned with clarifying how it allows Schelling to be distinguished in the history of ideas.

Schelling's thought is distinguished, first, as a reformulation of Bruno's thought. His return to Bruno was not without its dangers, nor was he able to make it uncritically. Voegelin explains why. He notes a certain ambiguity in Bruno's appropriation of Christian and Hellenic philosophical symbols. This ambiguity still allows debate today over whether or not Bruno was a vulgar pantheist. Those who continue to think of him in this way tend to do so by isolating his account of the universe as a "world-soul," taking this alone to be what Bruno acknowledged as God. It is true, Voegelin notes, Bruno wrote of the *anima mundi* as a divine being. But Voegelin also maintains that Bruno acknowledged an aspect of divinity which transcends the world and animates it. This point was not unknown to the Inquisition that persecuted Bruno. Even so, it was not enough to keep him from being burned at the stake. The Inquisition suspected that Bruno was a unitarian deist, that his theology supported the notion of creation as a "world-machine which after creation runs according to its own laws." If God is limited by the creation, it cannot be the God of orthodoxy, the Inquisition decided. Despite the debatable ambiguity in Bruno's terminology, Voegelin rules against the Inquisition's decision to kill him. As evidence of Bruno's probable intent, Voegelin turns to "the conclusion given to [Bruno's speculation] by Schelling" (207-08).

Schelling returns to Bruno in full view of the need for clarification of his theological philosophy. Schelling was not burned at the stake, but he was accused of pantheism by some of his contemporaries.²² According to Voegelin, beyond public misunderstandings of Bruno's thought,

²² Schelling dismissed his critics, suggesting in a characteristic way for him that they return to school for some lessons in ancient Greek logic (*Cf.* "LO," 198-99). The central point of contention was the meaning of the copula in Schelling's claim, in effect, that "God is nature." To some, this claim suggested a vulgar identification of nature and God. But Schelling maintained, following the "profound logic of the ancients," that the copula was meant to indicate a relationship between *antecedens et consequens*. Accordingly, Schelling intended to convey that God is superior to nature, though nature is within God. Schelling argues that it is

Schelling realizes that Bruno's inconclusiveness was due to "the lack of an adequate terminology for distinguishing the substantial identity of God and the realms of being from their static morphological differentiation." In his attempt to distinguish points that Bruno left unclear, Schelling uses the "much misunderstood term 'potency' (*Potenz*)" for the stages or degrees of the one, substantially divine process of reality. Among other things, the German *Potenz* "designates the degree of a member in a series of mathematical powers (for instance 2, 2², 2³ . . . 2ⁿ)." Schelling uses this terminology to designate degrees in the substantially unified process of the "One," differentiating its strata as the formal potencies A¹, A², A³.

The first potency (A¹) is "nature." This is the potency "that resists revelation and articulation," the unknown whatness of Kant's noumenal *Ding an sich*, and the unconscious dimension of the human *psyche*. The second potency (A²) represents "spirit" or "consciousness." It is substantially identical to the first, though its activity is different. It is found always to be "blossoming out of nature into the articulated world from inorganic forms to man." We do not remain completely blind to the substance of nature, as Kant thought. Rather, its substance becomes partially revealed to us by virtue of the activity of the second potency, this "savior and liberator" (208).²³ It is important to stress that spirit (A²) is shared by humans and the rest of nature, albeit to different degrees. The implication here is that one's mind (spirit) is always already substantially identical to anything one attempts to know. This identity of thought and being is not created through dialectical reflection. Rather, in Voegelin's account, Schelling insists that the identity of thought and being precedes all conscious differentiations. "[T]his identity is not comprehensible empirically [*i.e.*, in the temporal flow of reflective dialectic]. The experience of identity abolishes all time and

possible to defend Spinoza along similar lines: Spinoza's real error is found in the deterministic nature of his theology, that it did not rise to account sufficiently for freedom. See Schelling, *Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit*, Werke I,7: 340-49 (Gutman trans., 11-22).

²³ Voegelin citing Schelling, *Die Weltalter*, Werke I,8: 244.

puts right into the middle of time absolute eternity" (219).

The eternal "in" humanity is symbolized as unconscious nature (A¹). The human soul becomes conscious (A²) of the eternal, however, by virtue of the actualization of a third potency. This is the activity of a higher spirit, lifting nature into "freedom" (A³). In symbolizing this potency, Schelling attempts to account for the experience of a free relation between nature and spirit. The third potency is, still following Voegelin's analysis, "the world-soul which is the connecting link between the universe (the *All*) and the purest God (the *lauterste Gott*)."²⁴ With this introduction of the "purest God" we find the central reason why Voegelin disagrees with Jacobi's charge that Schelling was a vulgar pantheist. "The articulation of the necessity in God into the universe and the consequent articulation of the freedom in God into a transcendent 'purest God,' show perhaps clearest Schelling's solution of the theological problem that had remained in suspense with Bruno." Schelling does not say that nature is identical to God. Rather, nature is thought to belong only to what is "necessary" in God: the order of nature is divine necessity, or God's nature. That which Schelling finds to be most properly called the divine essence, however, is God's transcendent freedom from the necessary order of nature. He thus occasionally refers to this aspect of divine freedom as A⁰. This symbol allows Schelling to account for the purest divinity's "rank outside the struggle of the potencies." Even so, it is important to keep in mind that both the immanent and transcendent poles of reality are, for Schelling, divine. He states: "Only the whole can be called God, and not even the whole, after it has grown out of the One into the All and thus has issued, as it were, from the Godhead'" (208-09).²⁴

²⁴ *Ibid.* Voegelin's account of the *Potenzenlehre* follows Schelling's relatively early development of this line of thought in *Die Weltalter* (1811-). Voegelin knows that Schelling continued to develop his *Potenzenlehre* throughout the rest of his life, eventually stressing the dynamic over the formal aspect of the potencies in his works after 1847 (*Cf.*, "LO," 209 n. 9). Voegelin attempts to account for the more dynamic aspect of the potencies later in his text, but this section reveals the extent of his formal understanding of Schelling's teaching.

So much for Voegelin's dismissal of the claims that Schelling was a vulgar pantheist. The further charge of unitarian deism was not brought against Schelling, likely because the accent in his later thought falls on the historical aspect of knowledge. Schelling's historiography is fundamentally concerned with developing an account of how the transcendent God can be thought freely to mingle with his immanent nature, thereby changing the dispensation of the natural potencies, unfolding them, in history. The potencies describe, to be sure, a relatively permanent and divine order of nature. But Schelling thinks that nature also has a divine history. Put differently, material evolution is the free evolution of God's immanent nature.

Voegelin acknowledges several advantages to this "ontology." First, it resolves certain ambiguities in Bruno's alleged equation of nature and God. Second, on a related point, it is useful in allowing Voegelin to correct "grave difficulties" in Nietzsche's thought. Voegelin argues that "Nietzsche's philosophy of existence is always in danger of sliding into a cheap naturalism because the distinction between nature as the 'ground' of existence, Schelling's first potency, and nature as the articulated realm of being [Schelling's second potency (A^2)] is never drawn clearly." More specifically, the "'will to power' as the will of the universe to self-realization and the *libido dominandi* as the biological urge of a particular human existence to self-assertion are with Nietzsche in a permanent state of confusion" (209).²⁵ Finally, Voegelin says that in formulating his *Potenzenlehre* "Schelling escapes the difficulty of having to identify terminologically the fundamental substance [of the universe] with any of the partial phases [*i.e.*, the potencies] into which

²⁵ Be that as it may, the matter is not clarified by Voegelin; nor perhaps is it clarified by Schelling's *Potenzenlehre*. Voegelin suggests that the "will of the universe to self-realization" would be in Schellingian terms the activity of the first potency (A^1). But here one encounters problems; for so is the *libido dominandi* of a particular human existence to self-assertion. Perhaps the ambiguity could be clarified by saying that the universal "will to power" is the activity of the third potency (A^3), while the particular manifestation of this will is due to the activity of the first potency. But this is not how Schelling describes the matter (of which more in Chapter 4). Furthermore, it remains unclear how the universal and particular wills are to be distinguished from each other when they are said to be substantially identical.

the process of the whole is articulated." Schelling does not have to choose arbitrarily between spirit or matter as the fundamental substance of the universe. He understands reality as an entirely living and divine process. It is all substantial. For Schelling, "[t]he fundamental substance is, therefore, neither matter nor spirit, neither a transcendent God nor an immanent nature, but the identity of the process in which the One becomes the articulated universe" (208).

To some, these points may suggest that Schelling has fallen into uncritical speculation. But Voegelin maintains that the *Potenzenlehre* is thoroughly grounded in experience. At no time does Schelling leave behind the order of human experience to speculate about the nature of reality in an idiosyncratic way. Voegelin discusses the concrete, particular human experiences symbolized by the potencies in his summary of Schelling's account of how conscious insights originate. Voegelin begins with "protodialectic experience." This term designates "the experience of the emergence of a content from the unconscious [A¹], still in the state of flux and vagueness before its solidification into language symbols [by virtue of A³], together with the 'tones' of the soul [A²] that accompany the emerging, such as anxiety, contraction, urge, pressure, striving, hesitation, unrest, disquietude, release, joy, etc." Voegelin uses the term "protodialectic experience" to interpret Schelling's model for the universal process as a movement from unconsciousness (A¹) to consciousness (A²) and the freedom (A³) to reflect on the nature of everything. In other words, the term "protodialectic experience" refers to the "wonder" that Plato's Socrates declares to be the beginning of philosophy, or the restlessness of the heart seeking God to which Augustine alludes in the opening lines of his *Confessions*.²⁶ Voegelin's "protodialectic experience" refers back to the beginning of conscious insight, which he claims is always beyond conscious control. He finds such experiences described

²⁶ Cf. Plato, *Theaetetus*, 155d (Loeb Classical Library); Augustine, *Confessions*, Henry Chadwick, trans., (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 3. For Voegelin's discussion of "wonder" and "unrest" at the beginning of philosophy, see "Reason: The Classical Experience," *Anam.*, 92ff.; *CW* 12: 268ff.

“all through Schelling’s work, usually in the context of a dialectical elaboration which they serve to support.” Rather than attempting to provide a full survey of these descriptions, Voegelin writes generally about Schelling’s analysis of experience. His account is intended to “throw some light on the development of anthropology after Schelling,” especially in its psychological dimension.

Protodialectic experience “is the experience of the creative process.” Voegelin emphasizes that we are dealing here with a “process,” rather than a creative “act.” To speak of an act may already imply too much conscious control. Rather, he maintains: “There is as much passion in this process as action. It is the process that links the conscious with the unconscious.” In other words, Voegelin sets out to describe the experienced tension in human consciousness (A²), which discovers itself between freedom (A³) and necessity (A¹). In the words of Schelling, as quoted by Voegelin, “All conscious creation presupposes an unconscious and is only an unfolding, an explication of the latter.”²⁷ The “moments” that phenomenologists commonly use to interpret stages of experience are replaced here by a description of “tones.” This suggests that a more nuanced account of experience is being developed; for “tones” can exist simultaneously, either in harmony or dissonance with one another, while “moments” cannot. The first set of tones described is said to have an “orgiastic tinge.” In order to avoid breaking the rhythm of Voegelin’s commentary, his description of the tones needs to be quoted in full:

The active potency [A¹] does not manifest itself immediately in full power but rather as a *gentle contraction*, like that which precedes awakening from deep slumber. With increasing strength the powers of being [A² and A³] are excited to *sluggish, blind, activity*. *Shapeless births* begin to rise. The being that exists in this strife *heaves as in heavy dreams* which rise from being, that is from the past. With increasing conflict these births of the night pass like *wild phantasies* through the soul, and it experiences in them *all the terrors* of its own being. The predominant feeling in this conflict of tendencies, where it does not know which way to turn, is that of *anxiety* or *dread (Angst)*. “Meanwhile the *orgasm of powers* increases more and more and makes the integrating power of the soul [A³] fear a *complete dissociation, or total dissolution*.” At this juncture the integrating power *sets free* or

²⁷ Voegelin citing Schelling, *Die Weltalter, Werke* I,8: 337.

surrenders its own life, by recognizing it as already past, and in this act of *release*, the *higher form* of its own life and the *quiet purity* of the spirit appear before it as in a flash.

This passage attempts to describe the birth of a conscious insight. Like childbirth, the experience is said to be extremely painful. A certain degree of “orgiastic suffering” is said to be inevitable, since “pain is something general and necessary in all life; it is the inevitable passage to freedom. Each being must learn to know its own depth; and that is impossible without suffering” (215).²⁸ The suffering of the philosopher, it seems, is caused by the peculiar consciousness of potencies becoming actualized in the soul. This consciousness arises when the eternal dimension of the unconscious (A¹) provokes the world soul’s freedom (A³) to search out its own depth. This is a great burden to bear for the most tumultuous part of the world soul—human consciousness (A²). It is a terrifying experience, indeed, for consciousness to realize that it is caught between, so to speak, the concupiscential relations of divine potencies. This terror is said to be universally present, though it comes to explicit consciousness only in human beings. According to Voegelin, “Schelling considers this experience as revealing the character of the universal process in general. ‘It is a futile endeavor.’” Schelling writes, “to explain the manifoldness of nature as a peaceful interpenetration and harmonization of different powers [*i.e.* in the Romantic fashion]. All that comes into being can do so only in restlessness and discontent (*Unmut*), and as anxiety is the fundamental feeling of every living creature, so is everything that lives conceived and born in violent strife” (216).²⁹ This anxiety is experienced to some degree by everything and everyone. But it is known most acutely only to few. There is an exponential relation suggested here: the more searching the conscious mind, the

²⁸ *Ibid.*, *Werke* I,8: 336, 335. This description of how spirit (A³) painfully surrenders its own life, thereby gaining its freedom, resembles Schelling’s account of what occurs in Christ’s resurrection. This teaching is interpreted further in Chapter 4.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, *Werke* I, 8: 322.

closer it comes to consciousness of the actual fray of potencies. The people who cultivate this consciousness, though suffering greatly, are also best able to enjoy the extraordinary "release" that comes when the potential relations occasionally give birth to substantial harmony and peace in the soul.

Voegelin thinks that Schelling intends fully to describe the universal process in terms pertaining to sexual tension and release. He assumes that "the term 'potency' was chosen with an awareness of its sexual implication. And, to the extent to which it rests on this aspect of the protodialectic experience, the *Potenzenlehre* would be a mathematizing speculation on the experience of the procreative act" (217). Clearly, judging by Voegelin's high praise for this insight, Schelling persuades Voegelin of the need for a descriptive terminology that transcends contemporary standards in phenomenology. Schelling's return to Bruno allows for the critical clarification of a "pantheism" which does not simply equate God and the natural world, but which also attempts to account for divine freedom in the play of naturally divine potencies. And Schelling's return to Bruno has another important consequence. It allows him to understand how human reason is simultaneously immersed in the substance of this universal process, or how reason is substantially divine rather than an independently human possession.

In the introduction to this section it was noted how Voegelin finds Schelling to be a great philosopher whose philosophical anthropology is able to transcend the Cartesian dualism of mind and matter. Thus far, however, it may appear that Schelling has not solved the problem of dualism. Rather, it might be argued, he has simply created a potentially confusing shell-game of potencies. It seems that the substance of reality can move from matter to spirit, or back again, depending on the type of critique needed to refute a particular type of phenomenalism. For example, when the phenomenalist is inclined to make matter the substance of all reality, Schelling emphasizes the substantiality of spirit, and vice versa. But Voegelin would likely respond to this objection by

calling attention to the apex of Schelling’s anthropology, his recovery of a properly spiritual or contemplative understanding of “rationalism.” Though the term “rationalism” may suggest the perspective of the Enlightenment, Voegelin is quick to point out that Schelling understands substantial rationality and the Age of Reason to be essentially and historically opposed (195). Enlightenment rationalism assumes Reason (capitalized) to be the immanent possession of human beings. It assumes that reason is human, and revelation is divine—and hence irrational. Enlightenment rationalism thus remains essentially within the conceptual dichotomy of reason and revelation given in Christian orthodoxy. It simply accentuates, in a reactionary way, the human pole of this dichotomy, accepting for the most part the way that Christian theologians have described human reason as merely “natural.” Once again, Schelling returns to Bruno as his principle guide and finds that such distinctions are lacking in substance.

Voegelin interprets Schelling’s account of substantial reason in several aphorisms, all of which emphasize the human mind’s “immersion” in the substance of the divine universe. This notion of immersion is the main point, according to Voegelin, that Schelling takes from Bruno.

1. Not we, not you or I, know about God. For reason, insofar as it affirms God, can affirm *nothing* else, and in this act it annihilates itself as a particularity, as something that is *outside God*.³⁰

Voegelin emphasizes the unity of all things “in” God conveyed by this aphorism. He calls attention to Schelling’s implicit step beyond Fichte with this claim, whose system stood on the strict or real difference between the ego and non-ego, the knowing subject and the object known. Voegelin agrees with Schelling that these terms cannot be reified as strictly independent entities. This is the critical mistake of all modern rationalism.

³⁰ Voegelin quotes Schelling from his *Aphorismen zur Einleitung in die Naturphilosophie* (1806), *Werke* I.7: 148ff. I have numbered Voegelin’s quotations.

2. The "I think," "I am," is since Descartes the fundamental error of all knowledge (*Erkenntnis*); thinking is not my thinking, and being is not my being, for all is only of God, or of the All.

Schelling's anthropology abandons the *ego cogitans* of Descartes, at least as the ground of consciousness. Schelling rediscovers, according to Voegelin, that "[t]he ego is not an ultimate entity with faculties of reasoning but a medium through which the substance of the universe [*i.e.*, God] is operating in its processes. In the knowledge of God, there is for Schelling no subject or object of knowledge; there is instead the life of the divine substance, animating the world and man as part of the world" (206-07). Thus, returning to Schelling's account:

3. Reason is not a faculty, or tool, and it cannot be used: indeed there is no reason that we have, there is only a reason that has us.
4. Reason is not an affirmation of the One, that itself would be outside the One; it is a knowing of God that itself is in God.
5. Reason does not *have* the idea of God, it *is* this idea, and nothing else.
6. There is no ascent of knowledge to God, but only an immediate recognition; not an immediate recognition by man, but of the divine by the divine.

At this point, Voegelin adds the following commentary: "In no way can God be an object of knowledge; we are never outside God so that we could posit Him as an object. Equally reprehensible is an attitude in which the subject would assert itself as the subject." In other words, theocentric theology and egocentric philosophy are equally undermined by what Voegelin takes to be Schelling's rediscovery of the inability of reason to establish conventional distinctions—*e.g.*, God, humanity, subject, object—with any substantial force.

7. There is no belief in God as a quality in the subject. You only wanted to save the subject, you did not want to transfigure ([clarify] *verklären*) the divine.
8. Hence the Absolute can be eternally preserved only as the absolute and indivisible identity of the subjective and the objective, which formula is equivalent to the infinite self-affirmation of God.

In these aphorisms, Voegelin finds “the full stop after the Age of Enlightenment and Reason” (203-04). They summarize the main themes that Schelling develops in his philosophy of absolute identity. Schelling’s distinctive formulation of his identity-philosophy will be compared to Voegelin’s philosophy of consciousness in the next chapter.

To summarize the point of analysis reached thus far: Schelling’s philosophical anthropology develops a broadly based empiricism. This is comprised of a substantial “ontology” (the *Potenzenlehre*) and a contemplative “rationalism.” In the ontology, relational differences between the strata of being are distinguished by the symbols for potencies (A^1 , A^2 , A^3 , A^0). In the rationalism, the substantial identity of these terms is emphasized: the particular strata in the order of being, symbolized by the potencies, are contemplated for their immersion in “the All.” These elements, the differentiating ontology and the immediate unity of all potencies contemplated in the rationalism, serve to define what Schelling calls the “double life” experienced by human beings. According to Voegelin, this “double life” is symbolized best for Schelling by the character of Prometheus in the Æschylean tragedy bearing his name. Voegelin is thus led to summarize Schelling’s philosophical anthropology by focusing on what he calls “Promethean Existence.”

The “double life” is interpreted by Voegelin as follows: “Man is not an absolute existence but has his being as part of the whole system of the universe. His nature, his unconscious, is not posited by himself as his ground of being, but he finds himself with it, as something under him on which he is dependent. At the same time, he is a self that exists as a clearly distinguished center in the universe; he is not a mere flicker in a universal fire but an existence grounded in itself.” These fundamental “tones” of experience describe how a particular human being may become conscious of the fact that he or she is part of the greater whole of reality. This part-to-whole consciousness is said to have impressed itself greatly upon Æschylus. According to Schelling, his “Prometheus is not a thought that was invented by man; he is one of those primordial thoughts that wedge

themselves into existence and unfold consequently if they find the appropriate environment in a perfect spirit, as Prometheus in Æschylus.” With respect to the “double life,” Prometheus is, on the one hand, a name for that which causes “`understanding and consciousness” in the souls of human beings who were “`spiritually feeble” in former times. As such, Prometheus is something divine in relation to humanity. He is the “`principle of humanity” that Schelling calls “`spirit (*nous*).” On the other hand, in relation to Zeus, the purest God, Prometheus is Will, an unconquerable challenge that cannot be put to death even by Zeus himself. As Will, Prometheus is said to be something human in relation to divinity. When the two aspects of Prometheus are taken together, Schelling concludes: “`Zeus is the *nous*, the *nous basilikōs* of Plato, and Prometheus has elevated to it a mankind that formerly did not participate in its activity; [on the other hand] the heavenly fire stolen from God (the *ignis aetherea domo subductus*) is the free will” (217).³¹

Voegelin offers no commentary on this account of Prometheus from Schelling’s *Philosophy of Mythology*.³² Instead, he returns to a much earlier work, Schelling’s *System of Philosophy in General and Nature-philosophy in Particular* (1804), and reserves commentary for the “more technical language” developed there. It is specifically in this work that Voegelin finds the myth of Prometheus formulated as the “`double life’ (*gedoppeltes Leben*) of the particular in the All.” Voegelin writes: “The particular [human life] has (1) a life in the absolute, that is, the life in the idea, which therefore has to be described as the dissolution of the finite in the infinite, of the particular in the all, and (2) a life *in itself*, which belongs to it truly, however only insofar as it is dissolved into the All: if it separates from the life of God it becomes a life of mere appearance” (218).³³ This

³¹ Voegelin quotes from a much later text, Schelling’s *Einleitung in die Philosophie der Mythologie*, *Werke* II,1: 481-4.

³² But this account of Prometheus resurfaces, almost verbatim, in Voegelin’s later work: *cf.* *OH* II: 253-64.

³³ See Schelling, *System der gesamten Philosophie und der Naturphilosophie insbesondere*, *Werke* I,6: 187.

separation is precisely what Voegelin finds to be the underlying problem in phenomenism. The contemplative unity of the human mind and its God is forgotten or ignored when Enlightenment rationalists assume the objectivity of science to be a strictly human accomplishment, rather than a manifestation of one structure of consciousness presupposing another as its foundation. Schelling remembers the other structure of consciousness in what he calls experiences of “anamnesis,” *i.e.*, contemplative recollection of the greater whole in which the human mind can think of itself only as a part.³⁴ Schelling writes: “There is one thing in man that has to be brought into recollection [*viz.*, unconscious nature (A¹) as the divine ground of the *psyche*] and another that brings it into recollection [*viz.*, the freely searching spirit (A³)]; one thing in which lies ready the answer to every searching question, and another that brings the answer forth from it.” The double life presupposed here allows for a distinction to be made between the inner “dialogue” of thinking and its external, articulate manifestation as “dialectic.” Schelling continues: “This split, this duplication of ourselves, this secret intercourse in which there are two beings, . . . this silent conversation, this inner art of persuasion is the peculiar secret of the philosopher” (212).³⁵

Voegelin interprets the relations as follows: “The external philosophical conversation and art of persuasion is the ‘imitation’ of the internal dialogue and therefore is called *dialectic*. We can summarize these passages in the thesis that the process of the universe can be made intelligible through an anamnesis by which the meaning of the external process is extracted from the unconscious in man” (*Ibid.*). This thesis also accounts for why Voegelin characterizes the central feature of Schelling’s anthropology as a contemplative “inner return.”³⁶ We have already

³⁴ Schelling’s use of the term “anamnesis” will be discussed at greater length in Chapters 3 and 4.

³⁵ Voegelin citing Schelling, *Die Weltalter, Werke* 1,8: 201.

³⁶ Schelling summarizes the “inner return” by claiming that “[e]verything, absolutely everything—even what is by nature external—must previously have become inward for us before we can represent it externally or objectively” (*Ibid.*, 202; Bolman trans., 87). This notion of the “inner return” attempts to account for the unconscious nature of experience prior to representation.

encountered another example of Schelling's focus on the "inner" origin of all meaningful experiences, namely, in his aetiology pertaining to the formation of peoples. The effects of Schelling's "inner return" become most pronounced when Voegelin turns to consider the political dimensions of his thought. But to remain in the classical anthropology developed here, the elements of the "double life" refer respectively to Schelling's recovery of both the contemplative and calculative aspects of reason. The former gains theoretical insights into the general structure of reality, insights of substantial unity over which the contemplating spirit experiences no fundamental control; the latter articulates the resulting relations of order intentionally, *i.e.*, seemingly with a measure of personal control. Contemplative "dialogue" is relatively passive, while "dialectical" calculation is relatively active.

Thus far the "double life" has been described primarily with respect to how it appears in two aspects of reason. But Schelling's anthropology is not based simply on intellectual experiences. Voegelin also describes experiences of guilt and harmony as "gates to the understanding of the 'double life'" (219). He writes:

The anamnestic dialogue and the orgiastic transition from the unconscious to the conscious are concerned with the process in which the soul [A²] rises from nature [A¹] to spirit [A³] On the occasion of this growing of human life to its spiritual, reflective stature we experience the tensions of freedom and necessity, of guilt and harmony. Free action is action in harmony with necessity; guilty action is action in rebellion against necessity. Guilt and harmony are the "tones" of experience that reveal the structure of existence and form the experiential basis for dialectical elaboration (218).³⁷

Schelling maintains that the growth in human beings from nature to conscious spirit has its limits. Voegelin attempts to clarify this point by contrasting the tensional manifestation of potencies in humanity and their formal harmony in God: "Man cannot escape the finiteness of his particular existence. His will to perfection in life is frustrated insofar as the nature under him [the unconscious

³⁷ See Schelling, *System der gesamten Philosophie und der Naturphilosophie insbesondere*, Werke I,6: 553.

(A¹) can never be completely spiritualized. The independent ground in him [A¹] resists conquest In God there would be a ground of darkness too if he did not make this condition unto himself, if he were not united with it to an absolute personality. Man, however, never brings his condition completely into his power, even if he wickedly strives to do so; his condition is independent of him; hence his personality and selfhood can never rise to the perfect *actus*" (220, 221). Consequently, human life is grounded in "melancholy," a condition that pervades the whole of nature: "'The darkest and deepest in human nature is yearning [*Sehnsucht*], as it were the inner gravitation of the soul: hence in its deepest it is melancholy The deepest in nature also is melancholy: nature too mourns a lost good, and to all life attaches an indestructible melancholy because it has something under it [A¹] that is independent of it'" (221).³⁸

This condition is broken in human beings only by fleeting moments of "grace." Voegelin interprets Schelling's account of grace from two relatively early works—the *Essence of Human Freedom* (1809) and *System of Philosophy in General* (1804)—where grace is said to come from heroic measures of faith required for the development of a substantially religious life. Voegelin writes: "The moment of happiness over the ground of sadness is the utmost that can be reached: and it arises only as the culmination of an austere religious life. Schelling's idea of religiousness is intimately connected with the Promethean experience. 'We do not mean by religiousness what a diseased age so calls, that is lazy brooding, pietizing, surmising, or a velleity of feeling the divine.' 'Religiousness is a conscientiousness, or that one acts as one knows and does not contradict the light of knowledge in one's action.'" Schelling wishes to distinguish his notion of conscientiousness from the deontological ethics of neo-Kantians: "'[One] is not conscientious who, when the occasion arises, has first to remember his rule of duty and then decides to do the right thing out of respect for the

³⁸ Voegelin citing Schelling, *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen* (1810), *Werke* I,7: 465f.

rule” (221).³⁹ Rather, Schelling calls to mind a more immediate sense of right conduct. This arises from the cultivation of “the existential meaning of faith against the decadent Christianity of the middle class.” Voegelin continues: “Faith is not a belief that something is true; that was Voltaire’s conception of faith, and this faith succumbed to the attack of rational and historical critique. For Schelling there is no merit in such belief. Faith has to be restored to its original meaning (*fides*) as trust and reliance on the divine that excludes all choice.” In Voegelin’s estimation, Schelling successfully recovers this understanding of faith. He thereby realizes that happiness is not permanent but falls into the soul only periodically, as “a ray of divine love.” This experience can be described “only as the effect of *grace*, of a peculiar happiness” (222).⁴⁰ Voegelin concludes his discussion of Schelling’s anthropology as follows:

The idea of the grace that falls in as a ray of divine love but still is grasped from the bottom of the eternal unconscious reveals the non-Christian character of the Promethean experience. The tension between creaturely finiteness and infinity, the tension between life and death, is solved in the Christian experience by grace that grasps man from above and annihilates him into the happiness beyond; the Promethean grace is grasped by man and releases the tension of life and death in a flash of immanent happiness (*Ibid.*).

This passage may help to explain why Voegelin praises Schelling highly in the “Last Orientation,” only to criticize him as a gnostic intellectual in the majority of his published works. Two points require special attention. First, it is odd that Voegelin should turn to relatively early texts in order to focus on the non-Christian character of Schelling’s accounts of faith and grace. Schelling’s latest accounts of these experiences are far more sympathetic to Christian theology than Voegelin leads one to believe in the quoted passage. Voegelin knows these later texts, but he ignores them in his account of Schelling’s anthropology. Second, it is odd that he should describe the experience of grace as “immanent.” Schelling does not tend to describe it in this way. And

³⁹ *Ibid.*, *Philosophische Untersuchungen über das Wesen der menschlichen Freiheit* (1809), *Werke* I,7: 399, 392.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, 393f.; *System der gesamten Philosophie*, *Werke* I,6: 563.

Voegelin is usually careful to emphasize why: no experience can be purely “immanent” in Schelling’s anthropology, since human existence is structured by the universal tension between God’s immanent nature (potencies A¹, A², and A³) and transcendent freedom (A⁰). A footnote attached to the quoted passage gives some insight into both of these points. A secondary reference cited in the footnote reveals that Voegelin’s understanding of Schelling’s “Promethean” anthropology is guided decisively by Hans Urs von Balthasar’s interpretation.⁴¹

Balthasar’s reading of Schelling focuses on early texts. He finds it unnecessary to interpret Schelling’s latest work, the voluminous *Philosophy of Mythology* and *Philosophy of Revelation*, since it “no longer exerts a living influence on contemporary history.”⁴² Balthasar begins his analysis by isolating a “Prometheus Principle,” a non-Christian type of rebellion he finds running throughout the recent history of German idealism. His focus on early works by Schelling in the discussion of this principle leaves him to interpret Schelling as one among several “Promethean” idealists—in a list that includes Fichte, Novalis, Hölderlin and Schiller. Most significantly, however, Balthasar’s account of Schelling is best summarized in the conclusion: “Schelling’s anthropology is indistinguishable from his gnostic theology.”⁴³

In his *Autobiographical Reflections*, Voegelin says that he first learned of modern gnosticism from Balthasar’s *Prometheus* (1937). He then discovered accounts of Schelling’s gnosticism in Balthasar’s *Apokalypse der deutschen Seele* and Baur’s *Die christliche Gnosis* (1835)(*cf.*, *AR*, 65-6). These are the principle books that guide Voegelin’s decision to dismiss

⁴¹ See “LO,” 222 n. 47; and Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Apokalypse der deutschen Seele*, Band I, *Der deutsche Idealismus* (Salzburg and Leipzig: A. Pustet, 1937). Voegelin also mentions this work earlier in his “Last Orientation.” He refers to it as “perhaps [the] most important” secondary work considered by him, and as Balthasar’s “excellent chapter” on Schelling (“LO,” 199 n. 2).

⁴² Balthasar, *op. cit.*, 246 n. 2.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 223. The theme of gnosticism appears at other places in the text as well (*Cf.*, *ibid.*, 209, 210, 238, 246, 247). Balthasar also discusses Schelling’s accounts of the “double life” (*Ibid.*, 229) and “melancholy” (*Ibid.*, 248-9).

Schelling as a gnostic intellectual in the majority of his published works. Considered pragmatically, this decision must have had a certain appeal for Voegelin. It saved him the trouble of overturning an established convention in German scholarship on Schelling and from entering a debate that may have made it more difficult to gain a hearing for his own work. But the decision to follow Baur and Balthasar remains curious on another level. The central weakness in their studies could not have escaped Voegelin. Baur and Balthasar interpret only relatively early works by Schelling. They focus on a time in his philosophical development when Christian symbols are less important than they become in his latest period, when his identity-philosophy is easily mistaken for the reflective identity systems of Fichte and Hegel, and when the central theme of his latest work—the historicity of consciousness—has yet to be developed. But Voegelin knew the later works well, and understood them far better than Balthasar. His ability to identify several participants in a “Schelling-Renaissance” bears witness to this point. Unlike Balthasar, Voegelin maintains that Schelling’s latest work continues to exert a living influence on contemporary thought, the “undercurrent influence” of Schellingian realism he finds in Schopenhauer, Kierkegaard, Nietzsche, Freud, and others (241). Consequently, Voegelin devotes considerably more attention to Schelling’s latest thought than do any of the critics he acknowledges as authorities in print, and he gains a better understanding than most of the core of Schelling’s philosophical anthropology: the order of the world that comes to light in reason is a self-affirmation of God in the order of human consciousness. According to Voegelin’s reading of Schelling, this is a discovery that comes to light gradually in the general course of human history.

History: The Existential Key to Speculation

Voegelin’s remarks on Schelling’s historiography are comparatively brief, even though he says that Schelling understood historical existence to be “the key to speculation.” It is possible for Voegelin’s remarks to be brief since most of the introductory work needed to understand Schelling’s

historiography has already been covered in the preceding analysis of his anthropology. Put simply, Schelling argues that the order of history is akin to the order of an individual soul writ large: “There is a light in the darkness,” Schelling writes. “According to the old and almost outworn saying, man is the world on a small scale. Thus the processes of human life from the utmost depth [A¹] to the highest consummation [A³] must be in accordance with the processes of universal life. It is certain: anybody who could write the history of his own life from the ground [A¹], would at the same time have concentrated the history of the universe (*Weltall*) in a brief synopsis.” The proper task of the philosophical historian, therefore, is to recollect how advances in spiritual insight have contributed historically to the formation of the historian’s own order of consciousness in the present. The philosophical historian seeks to know himself by recovering as much as possible of the entire development of human consciousness in history. He can do this because his soul is “[d]rawn from the source of things and akin to it,” always having within itself the principle for a “co-knowledge (*Mitwissenschaft*) of creation” (210).⁴⁴ This condition of the soul is what allows it to grasp the intelligible order of its history.

Since the human soul is experienced as a process, and its life is substantially identical to the processive life of the divine universe, Schelling claims that the “double life” of the individual also manifests itself in history. Voegelin interprets: “History thus has a double meaning. It is, first, the actual course of natural and human events in the universe; and this course of events becomes history in the second meaning if it is understood by man as a meaningful unfolding of the universe.” Schelling does not claim that the natural potencies, experienced in the present order of consciousness, have always been actual and therefore known by human beings. The potencies of nature have a history in which they have become actualized in discernable epochs. The

⁴⁴ Voegelin citing Schelling, *Die Weltalter, Werke* I,8: 207, 200.

contemplative historian discovers the second dimension of history, its "inner" meaning, when it is recognized that external changes in symbols reflect initially internal changes in experiences. "This internalization of the course of events, this immersion of the external process into a movement of the soul, is possible because the internalizing soul is itself part of the stream [of reality and its history]. When the soul gives meaning to the stream, it discovers the stream and its meaning in itself. In this sense the soul is knowledge, and history is a science of the soul" (211).

All genuine experiences in history and the symbols by which they are expressed arise from the unconscious depth of the soul. To read the changing trail of symbols in history is to recollect what experiences God has caused to surface in human consciousness. Such a reading begins by the contemplative return, the "anamnesis," to the order of one's own consciousness. The order of consciousness discovered in one's own "history" is then expanded into the order of human history in general (212). For example, the notion that God transcends the world, at least in part, is an experiential discovery that has a history. This discovery was made in what Voegelin and (the latest) Schelling take to be the highest form of historical existence attained thus far, *i.e.*, in Christian theology and its increasing focus on the historicity of consciousness. Thus, when a modern philosopher discovers the notion of transcendence to be a living reality in the soul, this notion must be projected backwards to its historical origin in Christian experiences and their symbolizations of the divine. Failure to make this connecting projection will result in a fundamental misuse of the symbol, in this case, "transcendence." Genuine symbols are not made arbitrarily, but surface involuntarily as the divine reveals itself in different ways to successive generations in history. The ability to make this broader discovery or "projection" reveals the substantial bond between the present order of consciousness and its past. Thus, Schelling's open projection psychology is not purely arbitrary—in the sense that it projects out of nothing or from a purely "immanent" soul cut off in all respects from the divine. Instead, "the projection renders results because the materials of

human existence in history are manifestations of the same stream of unconscious nature to which the projecting philosopher himself belongs." The proper task of the contemplative historian is, therefore, to construct a dialectical response to what has been given by the divine, not to indulge in the error of thinking that one could construct or immanently project a reality of one's own making: "Projection of meaning and stimulation by materials interpenetrate so that the materials receive their meaning from the existence of the interpreter, while they in their turn touch the unconscious and bring to the level of consciousness meanings that otherwise would have remained submerged. History receives meaning from the soul, while the soul discovers the historical meanings as strata in its existence" (240).

Schelling's historiography is progressive, but the progression of epochs leading to the present order of consciousness has not been determined by human fiat. He argues, rather, that all progressive changes in epochs reflect relatively new actualizations of divine potencies. In other words, history is made by the divine, not by the relatively immanent will of human beings. The intelligible order of history is described as a "theogonic process" which "unfolds" in the human soul. Voegelin interprets: "Pagan polytheism [dominated by A¹], Hebrew monotheism [dominated by A²], and Christianity [dominated by A³] are stages of a theogonic process in which divine revelation and human creation of symbols interpenetrate each other. Myth and revelation are the vessels of divine self-affirmation in the world through man; they are part of the history of the universe just as much as of the history of living forms" (211; *cf.*, 226). Evolution, properly speaking, is not known through changes in external phenomena, but by recovering the progressive history of inner experiences of order. Progress in history is substantial, initiated by the divine, and intelligible. It is not to be found in the phenomenal construction of an arbitrary system, based on idiosyncratic notions of progress. It looks primarily toward the past in order to understand the intractable foundation upon which the present has been built. This situation places certain limitations on historical knowledge. Voegelin

praises Schelling, against Hegel, for granting that we cannot know the meaning of history as a whole. Schelling is distinguished precisely for his ability to understand that the future can never be brought within the control of a dialectician:

In Hegel's dialectic, the movement [of the Spirit (*Geist*) in its historical unfolding] has come to its end and philosophy has reached its systematic end with the end of the objective movement; for Schelling the dialectical elaboration of the anamnesis is a work of art that does not prejudice the elaborations of future artists. Hegel's philosophy of history bears still the marks of Enlightenment insofar as the Idea has come to its full, reflective self-understanding in the present; Schelling is beyond Enlightenment insofar as man has become an unexhausted historical existence. For Hegel there is no perspective into a future; for Schelling the unconscious is pregnant with time that has not yet become past (213-14).

Although Voegelin says that the dialectic of Schelling and Hegel is "derived historically" from the same root—the mystical tradition of Jacob Böhme—, he also grants that Schelling breaks with Hegel's attempt to objectify what the mystic gains in visionary experiences of the divine: "Schelling insists that 'we do not live in vision (*im Schauen*); our knowledge is piecemeal, and that means it must be produced piece by piece in divisions and stages, and that cannot be done without any reflection'" (214).⁴⁵ This is one of the clearest instances where, as previously noted, Schelling returns behind Hegel to Kant for his understanding of the proper scope and limitations of reflective consciousness. This return bears upon Schelling's understanding of historical dialectic. Against Hegel, Schelling maintains explicitly that "the very existence and necessity of dialectic prove that philosophy is not at all yet real science'" (213).⁴⁶ Schelling continues to understand his age as a time of struggle, though as one which may look cautiously toward a glorious future: "Heralds of [the Golden Age], we do not want to gather its fruit before it is ripe, nor to misunderstand what is already ours. . . . We cannot be narrators [of a completed historical system] but only explorers, weighing the pro and con of each opinion until the right one stands firm, indubitable, rooted forever."⁴⁷ In what

⁴⁵ Voegelin citing Schelling, *Die Weltalter, Werke* I,8: 203.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 202.

⁴⁷ My citation of the complete text that Voegelin alludes to by Schelling, *Ibid.*, 206 (Bolman trans., 91-2).

may seem to be the beginning of an eschatological indulgence, Voegelin sees “a promise in these words, but not more” (213). He defends Schelling’s historicism against possible confusion with Hegel’s eschatological gnosticism. Schelling’s “realism” prevents him from indulging in expectations that a perfect realm of peace could be established within the order of human existence, as it is known presently.

Politics: Waiting for the End—Together

Voegelin’s account of the anthropological and historical dimensions of Schelling’s thought has already begun to delimit what Schelling takes to be the proper scope of politics. Thus far the analysis has suggested that contemplation is the highest activity in which human beings find their fulfillment. In his discussion of Schelling’s political philosophy, Voegelin begins to develop an important implication that follows from this understanding of the highest pursuit in human life. He argues that the contemplative life yields no pragmatic policy, no rule for action in the political world. Schelling did not become a contemplative political activist, Voegelin writes, because “[t]he inner return is the path to personal perfection; it is not the path of human coexistence in community. . . . This return is. . . everyone’s most personal affair. The sanctification of the individual life has nothing to do directly with the salvation of mankind” (223, 220). The sanctification that may follow from the “inner return” cannot be found “in blindness of [outward] action. Those who strive for freedom of action in the world (in the Christian sense) will lose it; the point for which they strive, the harmony of freedom with necessity, recedes from them in action.” Schelling himself is even more assertive in his elaboration of this point. He contends that nothing is farther from the inner return “than the restless striving to improve or advance others in direct action, that philanthropical addiction of so many people who permanently talk about the weal of mankind and want to accelerate its progress, thus taking the place of Providence; usually they are people who do not know how to perfect themselves and want to make others enjoy the fruit of their boredom.’” The Golden Age they

seek “`would come of itself if everybody would represent it in himself, and who has it in himself does not need it outside himself ” (220).⁴⁸

The central point is clear. The political activist who attempts to play the role of secular evangelist misunderstands the origin and limitations of political harmony. The central mistake lies in the assumption that a doctrine, a “blueprint” for the perfect polity, could be formulated and delivered as a cure for the ills of society, perhaps even once and for all. To correct this mistake Schelling argues, in effect, that the true significance of the “inner return” cannot be taught; for it consists of the individual soul’s wordless “dialogue” with eternity. This is purely a contemplative matter. Accordingly, it becomes clear that the political philosopher cannot do much, if anything, by way of community formation. The true identity of a people is formed by the inner workings of the divine, not by the outer proclamation of relatively idiosyncratic passions, individual pleas for unity around this or that point of special interest.

The experiential ground of contemplation cannot be taught, but the resulting restriction on particular types of being in the world does not mean that Schelling’s political philosophy entails a total retreat from political action. Far from it. After all, Voegelin contends that he did develop a political philosophy—indeed, one which reestablishes the level of insight gained by Plato and Augustine (227). Schelling realizes, in keeping with his great predecessors, that political philosophers can still accomplish much good for society, and notably in two related ways. First, even though the “inner return” cannot be taught, it can be encouraged. The contemplative can do much to show to others that the examined life is most worth living. Second, once the experiential fruits of contemplation are gained concretely, once the “intelligible constitution of being” has come

⁴⁸ Voegelin citing Schelling, *System der gesamten Philosophie, Werke* I,6: 563. This statement calls into question Schelling’s “Promethean” anthropology. Although Balthasar also quotes passages from this page of the *System* (*Cf., op. cit.*, 232, 236), he passes over in silence this strong statement against the “philanthropical addiction” of modern progressivists.

into view along with humanity's place therein (223-4), the political philosopher is enabled to formulate rational standards of critique, deriving from the understanding that the unexamined life is least worth living. Considered pragmatically, this critical activity may curtail the fragmentation of society that occurs when one broker of parochial power or another attempts to proclaim a pseudo-unity as the genuine basis of a political society. Put differently, Schelling's political philosopher criticizes the ideological fragmentation of society in those who would divide in order to conquer.⁴⁹

When Schelling gains the experiential standards of critique, Voegelin argues, he is led to draw upon Christian and Greek symbols for his account of the good society. Despite the non-Christian "tones" in Schelling's "Promethean" anthropology, Voegelin grants that the focus on contemplation amounts to Schelling's "restoration of the Christian meaning of life in sanctification." This restoration also "determines Schelling's attitude toward the dominant political ideas and attitudes of the age" (219, 219-20). The inner return itself is necessary, Schelling maintains, because humanity has "fallen." The Christian account of humanity's "fallen" nature, among similar accounts known to him, attempts to account for the separation in consciousness between "internal" and "external" aspects of reality (225). Since collective humanity no longer exists in actual unity with the divine, it seeks what can amount only to a second-best type of unity in the state. The state becomes "[t]he substitute for, as well as the remnant of, the lost eternity. . . . The state is 'a consequence of the curse that rests on mankind'" (223).⁵⁰ This awareness of the state as a second-best type of unity is paramount for Schelling. It accounts for his "realism" in contrast to those who

⁴⁹ This point begins to address the concern, mentioned recently by John Ranieri, that the increasing turn toward "meditation" in Voegelin's later work seems to leave political philosophers who are sympathetic to his insights with nothing to do in the world. See John J. Ranieri, *Eric Voegelin and the Good Society* (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1995), 246-56. Ranieri himself does not draw this conclusion from Voegelin's later work. On the contrary, he suggests that nothing in Voegelin's meditative philosophy of order and history stands in the way of political philosophers who want to become Christian activists.

⁵⁰ Voegelin citing Schelling, *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen, Werke* 1,7: 461.

would seek a perfect realm of peace in the world.

Where Schelling refers simply to the "state," however, Voegelin finds it necessary to distinguish between the "state" as a constant political form in history and the modern "power-state." This distinction is necessary, he argues, because Schelling "does not develop a theory of the state as a constant political form in history; he rather develops a theory of political existence that is inseparable from the general process of history. . . .The 'state' is one specific historical differentiation of political existence that characterizes postmedieval political development." Voegelin notes that Schelling was at least aware of the need for such a distinction. He finds this awareness specifically where Schelling "opposes to the French construction of the power-state the German Reformation as a counter-movement to the state that ultimately will replace the medieval ecclesiastic theocracy by the 'true theocracy,'" *i.e.*, by "the rule of the recognized divine Spirit" (226 n. 56).⁵¹

For Schelling, "state," in its pejorative sense, "is a type of existence modeled after the French national state of the period of Louis XIV" (226). It is a corrupt, despiritualized form of the true state. It seeks mistakenly to establish the spiritual unity of its members only by external means; in the extreme case, it seeks to create a heaven on earth or to realize a utopian "ideal." According to Voegelin, Schelling protests that "the search for an ideal state must be futile. The perfect state is not for this world, and any attempt to devise it can only end in apocalyptic fancies" (224).⁵² Yet people have persisted in these fancies. Since Kant, politics has been concerned "only with the profane power-state" (226). Kantian political philosophy attempted to show "how unity is compatible with the existence of free individuals, how a state is possible that can serve as the basis for the highest

⁵¹ Schelling elaborates this opposition between French and German regimes in his *Philosophie der Mythologie, Werke II, 1: 546*.

⁵² See Schelling, *Einleitung in die Philosophie der Mythologie, Werke II, 1: 552*.

freedom of the individual.” But Schelling argues that this type of state is impossible to realize, and he outlines the course of political disintegration that follows necessarily when incautious progressivists attempt to bring it about. By emphasizing the freedom of individuals, the state eventually becomes deprived of its strength: a “short dream of freedom” is followed by “a despotic increase of state power, as the course of the [French] Revolution has shown.” Voegelin argues that the same course of disintegration is evident in the history of early modern political theory as well: “After a period in which everybody talked of freedom, the most consistent men, when they developed the idea of the perfect state, arrived at the worst despotic conceptions, as for instance Fichte in his *Geschlossene Handelsstaat*. Schelling concludes that the power-state as such cannot find a true and absolute unity at all” (224).⁵³

Voegelin saw no immediate end to the inevitable increase in tyranny that results once it is assumed that the “internal unity” of the spirit between citizens is something with which politics can dispense: “tyranny will probably increase until it reaches a maximum that will perhaps induce mankind to embark on a less partial course. What these future attempts will be, we do not know. But it is certain that a true unity can be achieved only through the highest and most comprehensive development of religious insight of which mankind is capable. The state will not disappear in this event, but it will liberate itself gradually from blind power and be transfigured into intelligence.” It is, in part, the proper task of the church to bring the power-state back to its true “idea,” to promote its liberation from blind power to intelligence. This is not to say that Schelling would have the church dominate the state. Rather, he would have the church take its proper place within the true state, encouraging it “to develop within itself the religious principle so that the great Covenant of all Peoples (*Bund aller Völker*) can rest on the basis of a common religious conviction.” To be sure,

⁵³ See Schelling, *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen, Werke* 1,7: 461f.

the church has not always lived up to the political aspect of its mission. However, its great mistake was not that it interfered in affairs of state, Voegelin contends, but that it permitted the structure of the power-state to enter its own ranks: "The church did not preserve its purity from the external; it indulged in advancement by external power. When it started to persecute the heretics, it had lost its true idea [*i.e.*, spiritual substance]" (225).⁵⁴

As part of his own effort to understand the nature of the religious and political crisis of his time, Voegelin turns to Schelling's "masterful analysis of the consciousness of crisis in the Greek polis as it manifested itself in the tension between the polytheistic state religion and the mysteries" (227). Despite the known outcome of this crisis in the Hellenic *poleis*, this tension between exoteric and esoteric forms of religion comes closest to Schelling's model for the true state. But Schelling thinks that one change would avoid the ancient consciousness of crisis: arguing hypothetically, he would have a philosophical (Johannine) Christianity replace the esoteric unity attained by the tenuous monotheism of the Greek Mysteries. Schelling knows that it was not possible for such a condition to occur: history is made by the divine and known only retrospectively by humans. At most, Schelling hopes and watches for changes in the present that resemble what God has done in the past and which may indicate signs of a present restoration of order. To this end, he describes three aspects or manifestations of Dionysus in Greek mythology, all of which contribute to the god's supreme portrayal in the Mysteries: Zagreus, Bacchus, and Iacchos. These aspects reflect the consciousness of past, present, and future aeons, co-existing in the minds of the Greeks. Voegelin interprets Schelling's description of them in this manner: "The Zagreus is the wild God of nature and the underworld, of ancient times; the Bacchus is the Dionysus that is celebrated in the public orgiastic festivals, the ruler of the present; the Iacchos is the Dionysus of the Demeter mysteries, the

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 463ff.

ruler of the future aeon, beyond the Olympian present of the polis.” The substantial unity of these gods is implied by the fact that each is recognized as a manifestation of Dionysus. But, according to Voegelin, Schelling argues that this unity was tenuous, due to the historical character of each god’s rule: “The mystery of Dionysus is the knowledge of the theogonic process [in history] and the presentiment of the end of the polytheistic world. . . . The consciousness is alive that the theogonic process has not reached its end in the present existence of the polis but will move on to a spiritual existence beyond the polis.” The Mysteries were tolerated because they had an historical place for the Bacchus of the present, the god of the acknowledged “state” religion. They were perceived as a threat to political stability, however, in their “expectation of, and yearning for, the death of the God and the advent of the new aeon” (228).

These intimations pertaining to a spiritual transcendence of the *polis* are thought by Schelling to foreshadow the advent of a new aeon in history, the death of the god, and the trans-political sanctification of humanity—all of which are proclaimed by the Christian church. Christianity is the true mystery religion, he contends, of which the Greek Mysteries were only prophetic in accordance with their historical position. Once the true Mystery is revealed in Christ’s incarnation, death, resurrection and the promise of human salvation that these events entail, Schelling claims that the church itself passes through three historical periods, each developing an increasingly spiritual return to its inner community: (1) the Petrine Christianity of Roman Catholic antiquity, (2) the Pauline Christianity of the Protestant Reformation, and (3) the Johannine Christianity of the triumphant spirit, which is yet to come.

For Voegelin, this three-fold progression of epochs is similar to the gnostic historiography articulated by Joachim of Fiore: “While the idea of the third, spiritual Christianity was perhaps not conceived under the direct influence of Joachim, Schelling was acquainted with his ideas and was

aware of the relation between his own speculation and the Joachitic" (230).⁵⁵ Despite this general similarity, however, Voegelin emphasizes that Schelling changes the "tone" of Joachim's speculation decisively. This change is also in keeping with the "realism" which leads him beyond a traditionally Christian understanding of life in order to focus his attention on experiences of melancholy and immanent grace. Voegelin writes: "We have to observe a similar break in Schelling's apparent continuation of the Joachitic speculation on the Third Realm. The perspective of a third, Johannine Christianity is not his last word." Schelling's "advancement to a new spirituality is at the same time a return to nature. . . . Schelling's sentiments in this respect do not express themselves in the vision of a new leader [of the Third Realm], either spiritual or temporal, but rather in a profounder understanding of the existential problem that is at the bottom of such an urge for mythical creation" (231). Schelling expresses the hope—tragic at present—that nature will be understood truly and completely as engaged in a transfiguring process of the spirit, by which God comes completely into his own. For Voegelin, the ability to keep his eschatological hope balanced by a realistic focus on melancholy is what amounts to "the decisive difference" between Schelling and Joachim:

The three Christianities are not the Joachitic three realms of the Father, the Son, and the paracletic *dux*. They are the phases of internalization of Christianity through Catholicism and Protestantism to a spiritual Christianity beyond ecclesiastical discipline. The churches are not replaced by a new church; rather, they are understood as symbols, comparable on their level to Hellenic mythology, to be overcome by the free Christianity of the individual souls. Schelling is neither a prophet nor the founder of a sect; he is a realist who expresses in his dialectic the existential fact that he, as an individual, is beyond the churches because the meaning of the churches has become actualized in history to the point where it has become part of the past in his soul. Neither is the Third Christianity a creed to be propagandized or organized; again, it is part of his existence, though not of its past, but with the time index of the future. The perspective into the future is not pragmatic; it is no more than the projection into dialectical symbols of a direction to be found in his existence (237).

The experience that manifests itself in the present of Schelling's soul has, according to Voegelin, a more precise content: "Schelling dreams of a public state under the condominium of

⁵⁵ See Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, *Werke* II,4: 298, note.

Dionysus-Bacchus and the spirit of Christ [replacing the Dionysus-Iacchos of the Mysteries]. This is not a return to the former Promethean existence in expectation of the end of the aeon; it is the vision of existence in community as a permanent state of that immanent grace that in Promethean existence transfigures only the fleeting moment of happiness" (233). Though Schelling "dreams" in this way, Voegelin does not criticize him for being a "dreamer." The public state under Bacchus and Christ is obviously not something that could be brought about by human action in the world; it is not an "ideal" that is meant to be realized. Rather, Voegelin takes this "vision" to express Schelling's realistic, eschatological hopes for a "true theocracy" in the world. It is realistic because Schelling grants that the perfect state could be created only by the "condominium" of divine forces. The condominium would transform human life, so to speak, into a permanent marriage at Cana, in which the spirit of Christ celebrates divine life together with the god of wine in human souls and nature at large. The celebration does come to an end, but only in death, given that Schelling does not expect an afterlife, but rather depersonalization. The intoxicating heights of Schelling's eschatological vision are not for the present aeon. The present is still properly characterized by Augustine's description of the world after Christ as a *saeculum senescens*, a time of increasing senility as personal fulfillment is still sought in "life beyond life" (231). Even though the time of Christ has not yet come, the conclusion of Voegelin's analysis of Schelling suggests that a new age may be dawning: "Schelling's philosophy of the idea in existence establishes a new level of consciousness in Western intellectual history in general and in the history of political thought in particular."

Voegelin attempts to reveal the superiority of Schelling's "new level of consciousness" by comparing and contrasting it with Plato's. Like Plato, Schelling lived at a time when a "religious crisis" in society had "reached the stage of enlightenment," thus calling for "a great philosopher who restores the order of thought by means of a new vision of the soul" (236). But this is where Voegelin

finds that the similarities come to an end. Schelling's philosophical response to the religious crisis in society is superior to Plato's, Voegelin contends, because "Plato had not yet the Christian dimensions in the understanding of the universe and of history; wherever he touches on the meaning of existence beyond the limits that are drawn by the political type of the polis, he has to resort, therefore, to the 'myth' as his instrument of expression. . . . For Schelling, the soul has penetrated universe and history; he does not need the myth but can translate his experience of the soul completely into the dialectic of the *Potenzenlehre*" (237). To be sure, Schelling has to break through several layers of tradition, as did Plato, in order to gain a vision of order that transcends the disorienting political circumstances of his day. But he does not have to leave everything behind. Voegelin contends that Schelling's break from disorder is facilitated by the fact that he lives "in the aeon of Christ and the meaning that history and the world have received through his soul." To Schelling, the experience of the soul as the source of philosophizing is "no new discovery." He lives in the acceptable tradition of its Hellenic discovery, in addition to its historical and universal differentiation by Christian thinkers (236). He attains a new level of critical realism due partially to his historical position. But, for Voegelin, the new age has only begun to dawn in Schelling. Thus far it has not produced significant results in Western civilization, at least in terms of its potential to rejuvenate spiritual order on a larger scale. The vast expanse of philosophical elements held together "by the strength of [Schelling's] soul"—the range of philosophical exploration from "protodialectic experiences," arising in the unconscious, to the projection of a "true theocracy"—broke apart in the decades immediately after Schelling and resulted in one of the worst intellectual and political crises in human history.

Voegelin concludes, therefore, by describing Schelling as one who "marks an end in the sequence of civilizational epochs" and, most importantly, as one who "establishes a new level of consciousness and critique." It is "by virtue of this achievement [that Schelling's philosophy]

becomes of increasing importance in a time of crisis as the point of orientation for those who wish to gain a solid foothold in the surrounding mess of decadent traditions, conflicting eschatologies, phenomenal speculation and obsessions, ideologies and creeds, blind hatreds, and orgiastic destructions" (242).

CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided a detailed analysis of Voegelin's "Last Orientation." It has interpreted Voegelin's attempt to gain a "solid foothold" in Schelling's thought, thus to liberate himself from the "surrounding mess" of his disintegrating civilization. Drawing on Schelling's posthumously published works, Voegelin offers consistent praise for Schelling's "realism." With respect to his philosophical anthropology, Schelling is Voegelin's principle critic of modern thought. Indeed, it might even be said that Schelling is Voegelin's main guide to postmodern thought of a substantial order. That is to say, in retrospect, much of Schelling's thinking looks like nascent postmodernism: his discussions of the will and unconscious mind as motivating forces to be accounted for by rationalist philosophy; his focus on the historicity of consciousness; and, correspondingly, his emphasis on the meaning of concrete existence over the formal truths of essentialist metaphysics. But perhaps the single feature distinguishing Schelling's anthropology from the relativistic trends typically associated with postmodernism is his contention that reason need not be abandoned to subjective opining. On the contrary, he argues that truly rational minds may come to know the most objective truth of all: rational truth is rooted in the self-affirmation of the All; it does not amount to the private construction of a substantially independent ego.

Voegelin also appreciates the extent to which Schelling's anthropological realism keeps him from entertaining utopian ideals in his historical and political philosophy. The "Last Orientation" reveals that Voegelin once thought better of Schelling than to equate his historiography with that

which is found in Hegel and Joachim. Voegelin provides a textually-based defense of Schelling against the dialectical gnosticism of Hegel and eschatological indulgences in Joachitic speculation on the order of history. And Voegelin applauds Schelling's ability to avoid being drawn into post-Kantian political idealism. This much has been established with respect to Voegelin's reading of Schelling in his "Last Orientation."

But to what extent did Schelling's thought continue to serve as an important "point of orientation" in Voegelin's later works? This is the question that will guide the analysis in Part II of my study. It needs to be answered in full view of what has come to light in the preceding chapters. To summarize: Voegelin frequently dismisses Schelling as a gnostic thinker, both in terms of his theoretical and historical philosophy. But he does so in a questionable way—with passing remarks and appeals to outdated scholarship. These practices are uncharacteristic of Voegelin's scholarship. Normally, he attempts to develop an exegetical case against the thought of someone he finds it necessary to criticize, and he attempts to support his case with the "current state of science" in the scholarship. One might have been able to dismiss Voegelin's treatment of Schelling as simple carelessness on his part were it not for the careful analysis of Schelling's thought that he provides in his "Last Orientation." This text has revealed that Voegelin knew Schelling's *Spätphilosophie* better than many of his contemporaries. But the extent to which Voegelin retained his foothold in Schellingian realism calls for further interpretation, beginning with his account of the principle that guides all of his later works.

II.

THE SCHELLINGIAN ORIENTATION IN VOEGELIN'S LATER WORKS (1952-1985)

PART TWO: INTRODUCTION

THE INTERPRETIVE PRINCIPLE OF VOEGELIN'S LATER WORK

Near the end of his life, Voegelin describes the interpretive principle underlying all of his later work with the following proposition: "*the reality of experience is self-interpretive.*"¹ Voegelin makes this statement in one of the contexts where he reflects on his decision to abandon his *History of Political Ideas*. The period of time recalled by this reflection, the mid-1940s, suggests that Voegelin understands his "later" work to begin with this decision. The fact that Schelling's thought played a significant role in this decision also suggests that the interpretive principle underlying all of Voegelin's later work may be Schellingian. Indeed, Voegelin's formulation of this principle bears a great resemblance to the way in which Schelling describes reason as the self-affirmation of the All. But it also resembles Schelling's account of how philosophers should interpret the experiences that give rise to mythic symbols.

At one point in Schelling's *Philosophy of Mythology*, the work that Voegelin claims brought the "crash" to his *History*,² one finds the following claim: "it is not *we* who have placed mythology, but mythology has placed *us* in the perspective from which, at present, we shall consider it. The content of this conference is henceforth no longer mythology explained by us; it is mythology as it explains itself [*die sich selbst erklärende Mythologie*]." ³ This comment occurs after a lengthy discussion of deficient approaches to the interpretation of myth. Schelling begins to argue that mythological experience and the symbols it engenders are self-interpretive. In brief, he argues that genuine mythic symbols do not arise as reflective signs that a clever person has intentionally

¹ Voegelin, *AR*, 80.

² *Cf.*, *supra*, 4-5; and "Autobiographical Statement," 119.

³ Schelling, *Philosophie der Mythologie*, *Werke* II,2: 139.

manipulated in order to construct an arbitrary "reality" of his or her own making. They arise from the human soul's pre-reflective immersion in the divine substance of the cosmos. Accordingly, Schelling insists that mythical symbols are not properly interpreted as merely "allegorical."⁴ Such interpretation mistakenly assumes that symbols are best understood with reference to other symbols, perhaps within an essentially closed system of meaning. Considered linguistically, allegorical interpretation means that words interpret only other words. As such, allegorical interpretation is closely related to a "structuralist" account of language.

Schelling argues, to the contrary, that the origin of symbols cannot be understood with reference only to other symbols. His particular understanding of the self-establishing character of symbols leads him to contend that they are best interpreted as "tautegorical."⁵ For Schelling, mythic symbols are what they symbolize. They arise beyond conscious control and are, in some sense, identical to the experiences that have engendered them. For example, he contends that the "Prometheus" of Æschylus is "not a human thought." It is one of the "primordial thoughts which

⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, II.1: Lectures II and III; and II.2: 139f.

⁵ *Ibid.*, *Werke* II,1: 195-6. Schelling says that it was Coleridge who was first led to formulate the specific term "tautegorical" after reading one of Schelling's previous works, *Die Gottheiten von Samothrake*, which dealt in part with the proper interpretation of myth. Schelling commends Coleridge as "the first of his English compatriots to have understood and put to intelligent use German poetry, scholarship [*Wissenschaft*], and especially philosophy." Schelling defends Coleridge against being "too severely criticized" by his fellow countrymen for his "unacknowledged borrowings [*Entlehnungen*]" from Schelling himself. He writes: "Because of this excellent term that I borrow from him, I voluntarily pardon him for all of the borrowings which he himself has made from my works, without mentioning my name." But Schelling also notes that his use of the term "tautegorical" may be more radical than that which he finds in Coleridge. For Coleridge, according to Schelling, the term appears to be synonymous with "*philosopheme*," which may still convey the sense that mythic symbols are signs for other phenomena (natural or euhemerical), thus leaving open the possibility of allegorical interpretations. In his use of the term "tautegorical," Schelling wishes to suggest a most intimate connection between mythic symbols and the experiences which give rise to them (Cf., *Werke* II,1: 196 n. 1; II,2: 139f.; also Pfau, *op. cit.*, 275, 278). Edward Beach has noted, following X. Tilliette, that "tautegorical" was used before Coleridge by Karl Philipp Moritz, in his *Götterlehre oder mythologische Dichtungen der Alten* (Berlin: Unger, 1795), 2-3. See Edward Allen Beach, *The Potencies of God(s): Schelling's Philosophy of Mythology* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1994), 261 n. 38. Voegelin's later criticism of the allegorical interpretation of symbols resembles Schelling's (Cf., *OH* IV: 33-6). Both Voegelin and Schelling find what the former calls "allegoresis" to result in an inadmissible type of reductionism.

pushes itself into existence.”⁶ Considered linguistically, this means that not all words simply interpret other words; some break loose from linguistic conventions and effectively illuminate essentially inarticulate experiences of a natural order, Schelling’s “primordial thoughts” (*Urgedanken*). Moreover, when such thoughts arise in human consciousness, they create an historical divide before and after the symbol came into existence. For Schelling, this divide has an objective quality about it, giving the history of symbolization a discernable order. Consequently, Schelling’s *Philosophy of Mythology* and *Philosophy of Revelation* undertake an extraordinarily complex effort to interpret this history of order as it emerges in the concrete order of human experience. With this historical aspect of symbolization in mind, he contends that “mythology has placed us in the perspective from which, at present, we shall consider it.” Schelling’s theory of mythic symbolization attempts to bridge the (conventional) gap between “nature” and “convention.” Schelling does not think that mythic symbols are properly understood as mere conventions, springing from nothing but a human will substantively isolated from the rest of reality. Mythic conventions can truly convene, he argues, only upon the primordial thoughts from which they arise. The precise reasons why and how he thinks it possible to understand that some conventions reflect an essentially natural (and divine) order will be discussed in the analysis of his theory of consciousness in Chapter 3.

Voegelin’s tacit agreement with Schelling’s “tautegorical” interpretation of myth is found in the third volume of *Order and History* (1957), only a few pages before Schelling’s philosophy of myth is explicitly dismissed for its allegedly “gnostic inclination to intellectualize the unconscious.” Voegelin says that “the ‘truth’ of the myth will arise from the unconscious, stratified in depth into the collective unconscious of the people, the generic unconscious of mankind, and the

⁶ Schelling, *Philosophie der Mythologie*, *Werke* II,1: 482. In Schelling’s words: “*Prometheus ist kein Gedanke, den ein Mensch erfunden, er ist einer der Urgedanken, die sich selbst ins Daseyn drängen.*”

deepest level where it is in communication with the primordial forces of the cosmos [Schelling's A¹].” Mythic truth is self-authenticating, Voegelin argues, “because the forces which animate its imagery are at the same time its subject matter.” The truth of mythic symbols is therefore tautegorical. “A myth can never be ‘untrue,’” he continues, “because it would not exist unless it had its experiential basis in the movements of the soul which it symbolizes.”⁷ Clearly, Voegelin and Schelling agree that mythic symbols arise from movements of the soul’s unconscious depth and break forth into the conscious articulation of experiences. Furthermore, they agree that what holds true for mythic symbols is also true of linguistic symbolization *per se*. Their agreement in this respect can be established more concretely by reflecting on the broader scope of their theories of symbolization.

Consider Schelling’s remarks on the formation of language. He contends that the development of language cannot be understood in a “piecemeal or atomistic” way. An atomistic account of the origin of language could easily lead one to believe that the soul is fundamentally in conscious control of the symbols it makes. This notion is declared to be patently false when the experience of nascent symbols is recollected, for example, in Voegelin’s Schellingian analysis of “protodialectic experience.” Schelling argues that language must have developed as a whole—in an “organic” (*organisch*) way. It must have originated, like mythic symbols in particular, from the soul’s unconscious depth. He does not think that the origin of language can be explained with recourse only to propositional language or formal logic. The most that one can do is use such language to point up the experiential fact that the formation of new language symbols is never

⁷ Voegelin, *OH* III: 184; also 190. Voegelin writes elsewhere of the self-generating character of Hesiodian symbols. Like Schelling, he argues that in Hesiod one finds the first transitional steps in history from myth to philosophy (*Cf.*, *OH* II: 127f.; compare Schelling on the same point in *Philosophie der Mythologie, Werke* II,2: 595-6). Voegelin does not mention Schelling in his discussion of Hesiod as one who also noted the transitional character of Hesiod’s writings. He credits Aristotle with this observation.

completely within anyone's conscious control. Rather, symbolization is a type of art, the making that is called poetry. "Since neither philosophical nor even generally human consciousness is possible without language," Schelling writes, "it is inconceivable that consciousness can be the ground of language; and so the more we penetrate its nature, the more we acquire the certitude that it transcends by its profundity any conscious creation."⁸ This realization leads Schelling to see an objective (*objectiv*) quality in language itself (*Sprache selbst*), a point which allows him to argue, in effect, that nascent symbols must be understood as self-generating and self-interpretive, *i.e.*, when traced back to their engendering experiences.

Of course, Schelling is speaking here only about *bona fide* symbols. At this point he does not address the problem that reality can be intentionally misrepresented when the symbol maker does not accept the relatively humble status of human consciousness in the symbol-making process. However, as previously noted in Voegelin's interpretive work, Schelling does address such rebellion against reality in his thoughts on what gives rise to the symbol of Prometheus and his descriptions of "pneumopathological" disorders. Sophistic constructions aside, Schelling wishes to make a simple point: The conscious self that interprets a symbol cannot be understood as the cause of its origin. All conscious interpretation of symbols, in order to be true, must not forget their unconscious origin. Proper interpretation must respect the tension between consciousness and the unconscious "self" through which the symbols have come to exist.

Voegelin has precisely this tension in mind in two of his latest essays: "The truth of . . . symbols is not informative; it is evocative." Symbols "do not refer to structures in the external world

⁸ Schelling, *Philosophie der Mythologie*, *Werke* II,1: 51, 52. In Schelling's words: "Da sich ohne Sprache nicht nur kein philosophisches, sondern überhaupt kein menschliches Bewußtseyn denken läßt, so konnte der Grund der Sprache nicht mit Bewußtseyn gelegt werden, und dennoch, je tiefer wir in sie eindringen, desto bestimmter entdeckt sich, daß ihre Tiefe die des bewußtvollsten Erzeugnisses noch bei meinem übertrifft."

but to the existential movement [*i.e.*, the experiences]. . . . from which they mysteriously emerge as the exegesis of the movement in intelligibly expressive language.”⁹ Thus, he writes elsewhere, one cannot “prove reality by a syllogism,” as though its truth were only a matter of coordinating the right words within an essentially closed linguistic system; “one can only point to [reality] and invite the doubter to look.”¹⁰

The “depth” of the soul from which symbols arise is not a datum of sense perception. It is a word symbolizing the unconscious origin of symbols in consciousness. In his latest works, Voegelin tends to replace references to the “unconscious” with references to the soul’s “depth,” presumably in order to avoid what he considers to be the fallacious uses of the unconscious in twentieth-century psychoanalysis. For example, he alludes critically to the practice of some psychoanalysts who describe the unconscious as an area with a topography that can be explored by a science that chooses to disregard the limits of experience. Voegelin seems to have Freud and Jung in mind as the subjects of his critique: for he criticizes the practice of populating the soul’s depth with “libidinous dynamics” and the “archetypes” of a “collective unconscious.” This practice, Voegelin contends, misconstrues the essentially elusive character of the unconscious as it emerges in consciousness and mistakenly attempts to gain “by *fornicatio fantastica* an absolute which a critical analysis of experience will not deliver.”¹¹ The unconscious remains in its unfathomable depth beyond consciousness, Voegelin maintains. It may have libidinous dynamics all its own, but these cannot be controlled in such a way that an absolute Ego could be constructed in a system of self-reflective philosophy, thus eradicating the depth *qua* depth. All of this is to say, despite the

⁹ Voegelin, “Wisdom and the Magic of the Extreme” (1977), *CW* 12: 344.

¹⁰ Voegelin, “Quod Deus Dicitur” (1985), *CW* 12: 388. It should be emphasized that the “look” mentioned here is not strictly in reference to sense perception. Part of the “look” of reality is only intelligible. For example, when Voegelin turns his attention to look for the origin of symbols he discovers this—following Heraclitus, Æschylus, and Plato—in a “depth” of the *psyche* which is “beyond articulate experience.”

¹¹ Voegelin, “Equivalences of Experience and Symbolization in History” (1970), *CW* 12: 124.

change in terminology, that Voegelin retains his earlier understanding of the unconscious origin of symbols even in his latest essays.¹²

Voegelin uses a broad notion of “experience” in the development of his philosophical anthropology. His understanding of experience agrees with similar accounts of the matter in a number of Schelling’s works. Both Voegelin and Schelling attempt to remind modern empiricists that even ideas have discernable experiential content. In Lecture VII of his *Philosophy of Revelation*, for example, Schelling distinguishes between two types of empiricism. He writes: “The lowest degree of empiricism is that in which all knowledge is restricted to experience obtained by the mediation of the senses, and in which everything supra sensible must be denied, either generally, or at least as a possible object of knowledge.” For Schelling, sensual empiricism does not exhaust the meaning of experience for philosophy. He calls attention to “a more elevated degree of philosophical empiricism,” one in which “we affirm that the supra sensible can become an effective object of experience.” He refers to this type as “mystical empiricism.”¹³ Schelling does not make this distinction haphazardly. He insists that it is derived from careful consideration of the complete nature of experience.

The “mystical empiricism” in Schelling’s philosophy of mythology and revelation seems to

¹² This claim is not contradicted by Voegelin’s brief remarks on the origin of language in the last volume of *Order and History*. To be sure, Voegelin says that one cannot decide between an essentially natural or conventional account of how words relate to reality because no one was “present when language originated.” The people who were present, at least, “left no record of the event but language itself. . . . [T]he epiphany of structures in reality—be they atoms, molecules, genes, biological species, races, human consciousness, or language—is a mystery inaccessible to explanation” (*OH* V: 17). But the conclusion to this comment is overstated; for Voegelin himself offers an explanation in the same sentence where such explanations are denied: he claims that “structures” in reality emerge in an “epiphanic” way. The theory of consciousness Voegelin develops in this work attempts to explain how the epiphany of structures is experienced concretely by human beings. What is more, the claim that no one was present when language originated is simply equivalent to saying that no one was reflectively conscious at the origin of a language symbol. And this is the substantial point in Schelling’s theory of symbolization.

¹³ Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, *Werke* II,3: 115f.; *Philosophie der Mythologie*, *Werke* II,1: 326, 386.

have persuaded Voegelin that his history-of-ideas approach to philosophy—the interpretation of ideas-as-opinions without critical reference to empirical control—yields an inadmissible distortion of both human existence and its history, what Voegelin calls “an ideological deformation of reality.”

¹⁴ More to the point, Schelling’s mystical empiricism appears to have been an important factor in the process of thought that eventually brought Voegelin to the realization that his *History of Political Ideas* needed to be reworked.

* * * *

So much by way of general introduction to Voegelin’s later work. Thus far the weight of evidence has provided no more than strong indications that Voegelin presupposes a Schellingian theory of experience and symbolization when he formulates the interpretive principle underlying all of his later work. Voegelin’s theory of symbolization agrees with similar discussions of the matter in Schelling’s *Philosophy of Mythology*, and both would have accepted “mystical empiricism” as an apt summary of their philosophical orientations. But the full extent of this agreement needs to be clarified through further comparative analysis of their works. To this end, Chapter 3 will interpret the theme of anthropological “order” by focusing on the philosophy of consciousness developed in selected texts by Schelling and Voegelin. I compare their attempts to understand the merits and limitations of ego-based philosophy since Descartes, and specifically their attempts to transcend Cartesian dualism after the breakdown of Hegel’s idealistic conceptions of order. Chapters 4 and 5 will interpret the theme of order in history—turning first to Schelling’s historiography, then to Voegelin’s use and transformation of what he learns from Schelling. This discussion follows naturally from a central insight both philosophers gain in their empirical studies of consciousness: the discovery that personal identity is historically derivative. Schelling and Voegelin turn to

¹⁴ Voegelin, *AR*, 63.

historical studies in order to understand how their ability to experience the various realms of being has been determined by the self-differentiation of being in the history of human consciousness. They make their historical turn in the effort to avoid several obstacles to substantial philosophy in modern times: the “vulgar materialism” of British empiricists, the idealism of German system-builders, and the dualism of Descartes. They try to balance the experience of order and the knowledge of its history in a grandiose effort that invites critical assessment.

CHAPTER THREE

THE ORDER OF CONSCIOUSNESS: SCHELLING AND VOEGELIN

*"[D]er Mensch zwischen dem Nichtseyenden der Natur
und dem absolut Seyenden=Gott in der Mitte steht."
— Schelling*

In order to gain a better understanding of why Schelling and Voegelin eventually devote the majority of their writings to the study of order in history, one needs to consider their philosophical anthropologies in greater detail. My focus on this area of their work will indicate why Schelling and Voegelin found it necessary to leave behind the ego-based philosophy of consciousness, inherited from Descartes, which many of their contemporaries continued to support in one form or another. The anthropological writings of Schelling and Voegelin focus on what it means to experience "order" in the consciousness of an individual life. They tend to use this term as a synonym for the "truth" or "nature" of consciousness. Accordingly, the following chapter will develop an account of how Schelling and Voegelin attempt to understand the true nature of human consciousness without presupposing its determination by general developments in the history of philosophy.

Their writings on the order of consciousness often begin with what appears to be an epistemology; both thinkers devote much attention to what can be known and how it is known. However, they also attempt to surpass some of the restrictions placed on the philosophy of consciousness by post-Kantian epistemology. They seek to elaborate a philosophy of order that gives primary place to reflections on the entire order of reality as that which constitutes the particular order of human consciousness. In other words, they attempt to philosophize in the manner of critical realists for whom ontology (in the broadest sense of the term) is the first science to which epistemology is properly subordinated. Schelling summarizes this thesis in the following proposition: "it is not because of thinking that there is being, but because of being that there is

thinking.”¹ Voegelin’s philosophical anthropology is structured by the same orientation. He claims that “ontological problems. . . constitute the *premise* of epistemology.”²

Both philosophers argue that it is possible to make such claims without returning to the uncritical speculation of pre-Kantian metaphysics. They present their arguments in support of a realistic philosophy of consciousness in full knowledge of Kant’s critical philosophy. Otherwise said, they attempt to describe the ground of human consciousness without recourse to metaphysical notions of God, being, reality or the “transcendental Ego” of phenomenology. The guiding thread in their anthropologies is a critical focus on the nature of experience. This focus helps them to articulate a moderate philosophy of order between the epistemological scepticism of Kant and the gnosticism of Hegel. But Schelling is the pioneer. His work in the philosophy of consciousness and subsequent turn to historiography helps Voegelin to realize that the best place to find “order” is in the study of its history.

1. SCHELLING’S ANTHROPOLOGICAL CRITIQUE OF MODERN SUBJECTIVITY

The greatest transformations in thought paradigms are often reducible to the simplest of premises, at least in retrospect: Ptolemy’s geocentric cosmos is replaced by the heliocentric universe of Copernicus, and the latter opens the way to claims that no discernable center can be established anywhere in an infinite universe.³ In a similar way, modern epistemology has tended to follow cosmology: the notion that the human soul’s primary contact with visible reality is what constitutes the common ground of knowledge for all is replaced by Kant’s self-proclaimed Copernican

¹ Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, Werke II,3: 161 n. c.: “Denn nicht weil es ein Denken gibt, gibt es ein Seyn, sondern weil ein Seyn ist, gibt es ein Denken.”

² Voegelin, *Anam.*, 32.

³ For discussion of how Copernicans and Newtonians opened the way to a de-centered universe, see Thomas S. Kuhn, *The Copernican Revolution* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1957), Ch. 7.

revolution in thought, where the *a priori* structure of the human mind becomes the center and relatively private ground of knowledge with respect to the natural world.⁴ Kant expands a line of thought previously developed by Descartes, among others, and prepares the way for Fichte to complete this inward turn, ultimately by declaring that each human Ego is the self-positing creator of all that it experiences in itself and in the so-called natural world. Like Kant, it is true, Fichte attempts to account for the unity of human experience in his practical philosophy. He argues that a moral imperative can be discerned in nature that is equally binding upon all. But his theoretical anthropology leaves this claim open to question. It allows one to suspect that even moral imperatives are colored by the subjectivity of the Ego that posits everything else in its willful construction of a private "reality."⁵ In the final analysis, therefore, it appears that no common ground or center of knowledge, whether theoretical or practical, can be discerned in the wake of German idealists. The center of what was once thought to be the reality in which all humans live has become relative to the individual maker of idiosyncratic "world-views" and "value systems."

This is the central problem with which Schelling's philosophy of consciousness contends: the increasingly solipsistic character of German idealism and its failure to account for the reality of a natural world common to all. Schelling claims that this problem has led to the "subjectivization [*Subjektivieren*]" of all rational knowledge (*Vernunftkenntniß*).⁶ This is the same problem, the parochial character of modern thought, that Voegelin addressed under the heading of "phenomenalism."⁷ Reality, it seems, can be fashioned in different ways by different people without

⁴ Immanuel Kant, *Critique of Pure Reason*, Bxvi; Bxxii, *a*.

⁵ For a brief account of this matter, see Schelling's *Immanuel Kant* (1804), *Werke* I,6: 1-10; and his *Darlegung des wahren Verhältnisses der Naturphilosophie zur verbesserten Fichteschen Lehre* (1806), *Werke* I,7: 42.

⁶ Schelling, *System der gesamten Philosophie und der Naturphilosophie insbesondere* (1804, published posthumously), *Werke* I,6: 142.

⁷ *Cf. supra.*, 60-81.

significant consequences in a real world. While some have defended this notion as the precondition of human freedom, or as reason to celebrate the diversity of human cultures, Schelling dismisses it as the manifestation of a spiritual sickness, the refusal to perceive a substantial order of reality that is not of human making. More to the point, he argues that the subjectivization of reason is caused by a fundamental error in thinking: the presupposition that the human mind and the rest of reality are substantially different, that the difference between “subjects” of cognition and “objects” of knowledge is a substantial difference. He calls this error the *proton pseudos*. This type of thinking is so common that it has become habitual. Each appeal to the “subjectivity” or “objectivity” of an opinion or work of science presupposes this distinction as its premise. “In our first reflection on knowledge,” Schelling writes, “we believe to have distinguished in it a subject of knowledge (or knowledge when conceived of as an act) and the object of knowledge, that which is known. I purposely say: we *believe* to have discriminated, for precisely the reality of this distinction is at issue here.”⁸ Schelling throws relativistic thinking back on itself and begins to suggest that it is not a substantial basis for a systematic philosophy of order. The exclusively temporal and spatial type of thinking that follows from this presupposition tends to yield, with respect to one’s knowledge of the external world, the antinomies of Kant’s pure reason. One may expend great effort in the attempt to make subjects and objects “correspond” within a system of reflective dialectics only to be forced to admit, in the final analysis, that this divide cannot be bridged by discursive reasoning. A “noumenal” dimension of reality will always be known to elude the grasp of synthetic dialectics. At worst, and this comprises the majority of contemporary epistemology for Schelling, the repetition of the *proton pseudos* yields a semi-rational form of scepticism which may at times become dogmatic. At best, discovering the error in the *proton pseudos* may help one to philosophize beyond

⁸ Schelling, *System der gesamten Philosophie, Werke* I,6: 137 (Pfau translation, 141).

the contentions of modern epistemologists.

Schelling's solution to the problems caused by the subjectivization of reason is found in his philosophy of absolute identity, or his identity-philosophy (*Identitätsphilosophie*). Although present in earlier works, the culmination of Schelling's identity-philosophy is formulated in the 1804 *System of Philosophy in General and of Nature-philosophy in Particular*. This work is highly critical of major trends in the history of philosophy and attempts to restore some classical solutions to the problems it discusses. Schelling opens this text by formulating a proposition that is intended to reverse the effects of the *proton pseudos*. He proposes that all knowledge worthy of the name begins only with the following premise: "The first presupposition of all knowledge [*Wissen*] is that the knower and that which is known are the same."⁹ By formulating this counter-proposition, Schelling questions the habit of dividing the world into subjects and objects, a presupposition which has remained largely unquestioned by characteristically modern thinkers. Although his counter-hypothesis can be stated clearly, its consequences are extensive and initially difficult to understand. Schelling will attempt to describe the absolute substantial identity of all things.¹⁰

This premise seems to yield some amusing consequences. Without further explanation, it suggests that I am identical to my toaster, my car, elephants, and everything else in the universe. Indeed, these consequences appear to be what led Hegel to make the now-famous joke about Schelling's identity-philosophy: the claim that it leads one into the worst of all possible obscurities, into "the night, in which, as people say, all cows are black." The identity-philosophy does not rest on the knowledge it claims to secure, Hegel maintains, but on "the naïvety of the lack of knowledge."¹¹ The joke leaves one to assume that only a private or subjective individual—an idiot

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 156.

¹¹ Hegel, *Phänomenologie des Geistes* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1970), 22. It was Schelling who thought that Hegel was directly attacking his identity-philosophy by making this joke. However, the case has been

(*idiotēs*) in Schelling's sense of the term—could take the identity-philosophy seriously.

But Schelling was no idiot.¹² The people who make this joke, and those who laugh at it, reveal only that they have not understood one of the cardinal points of the identity-philosophy: Schelling maintains that the absolute identity of all things precedes discursive or reflective thought; it is the *prius* to which all reflection stands in formal opposition.¹³ The joke is initially amusing only because those who laugh at it tacitly continue, by force of habit or in sophisticated resistance to Schelling's central claim, to smuggle reflective differences into the pre-reflective identity of the absolute. One laughs because one habitually presupposes the substantial reality of polarities such as "night / day," "cows / non-cows," "black / white." But in Schelling's symbolization of the absolute no antitheses are conceivable as reflecting substantial differences between things. There is no night opposed to day, no cows opposed to non-cows, no black opposed to white. Schelling attempts to call attention to the substantial identity of absolutely everything. He knows that a number of paradoxes will arise from this presupposition. But he is willing to confront them, it seems, in order to accomplish two fundamental goals: (1) to criticize rationalists of his time by suggesting that the fundamental reality sought by modern epistemology is always already beyond rational control; and (2) to point up the contemplative aspect of reason, beyond its instrumental use of the subject-object distinction.¹⁴ In order to avoid a host of possible misunderstandings at this point, one must pay close

made recently that Hegel was sincere in his 1807 reply to Schelling, which states that he was criticizing only some of the excesses of Schelling's followers, not Schelling himself. H.S. Harris contends that Hegel had Reinhold and Bardili in mind when he relayed this joke. See Dale E. Snow, *Schelling and the End of Idealism* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996), 187f.

¹² Schelling criticizes the notion of an ἰδιότης, due to its implication that the human soul, or even divine being, is an indivisible unity (*Eigenheit*) upon which a purely reflective philosophy of being could be constructed (Cf., *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Werke* II,2: 230); Voegelin also dismisses the "egophantic" ground of "idiots" (Cf., *Anam.*, 179).

¹³ Schelling, *System der gesamten Philosophie, Werke* I,6: 170. For discussion see Thomas Pfau, "Identity Before Subjectivity: Schelling's Critique of Transcendentalism, 1794-1810," in *Idealism and the Endgame of Theory*, Thomas Pfau, trans. & ed., (New York: State University of New York Press, 1994), 24-57.

¹⁴ On the notion that the absolute *prius* is beheld in "contemplative [*contemplative*]" experiences or "intellectual intuition [*intellektuelle Anschauung*]," see *Werke* I,6: 153f.

attention to Schelling's claim that the absolute is not produced by reason or even the human will; it is immediately encountered as that which produces reason and will *per se*. This claim attempts to reverse much of the thinking that Schelling encountered in the philosophical climate of his time. But can it be defended persuasively as an alternative to modern systems of philosophy based on egological reflection? Does it constitute only a reversal in thought and speech, or can it be supported by appeals to the empiricism that ostensibly supports his thinking?

Modern epistemology typically begins by presupposing substantial differences between the self and the world, the self and God, the self and other selves. This presupposition leaves the search for knowledge to focus on how to affect a union, if possible, between these substantially different things. This union, it is initially supposed, is what would yield knowledge of the other by the self. This knowledge was sought—by Kant, Fichte, and Hegel—in the productive or synthetic union of opposites by pure thought. Kant and Fichte concluded, however, that synthetic unions could yield only phenomenal knowledge of objects within the synthesizing mind of particular subjects, since the substantial or noumenal reality of objects was found to lie beyond the grasp of essentially different subjects of cognition. Even when the subject of cognition and the object known were the same, as in the self-consciousness proposed by Fichte, one could never be certain that the concept of Ego was not itself derived from the categories of reason used in the transcendental construction of external objects.¹⁵ The conclusions of transcendental idealism disappointed Schelling and Hegel alike, both of whom wanted to obtain direct knowledge of the substance of reality. Their respective attempts to provide a better account of the matter, however, eventually took completely dissimilar paths.

¹⁵ This summary account of fundamental developments and concerns in modern thought paraphrases a number of Schelling's analyses (Cf., *Werke* I,6: 144-5, 154-5, 186-7; *Zur Geschichte der neueren Philosophie*, *Werke* I,10: 73-98; *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, *Werke* II,3: *passim*).

Hegel attempted to find mistakes in what he took to be Kant and Fichte's essentially correct reflective philosophy. He sought to overcome their logical mistakes in order to attain the knowledge of noumenal reality that avoided their grasp. Hegel began by presupposing differences in order to bring about the identity of subjective cognition and objects known, including the self, at the end of his system. However, Schelling realized that reflection is always already distancing. It is reflective consciousness itself that brings about the apparent difference between "subjects" of cognition and the "objects," including the "self," which they attempt to know. Consequently, the divisive nature of reflective consciousness will never be able to affect the union it seeks to accomplish. Schelling writes:

[I]f reflection is expected to restore the finite particular to the All [*dem All*] from which it has been derived, it recognizes the nature of its task, though it does not know how [to bring it about]; it does not comprehend that in this renewed dissolution what is being restored will lose precisely what reflection had obtained only through and in the process of disjunction. For reflection, then, this identity of the finite [*des Endlichen*] with the infinite [*dem Unendlichen*] remains a mere *synthesis* and no genuine dissolution [*kein wirkliche Auflosung*] of one into the other.¹⁶

This realization leads Schelling to perceive considerable limitations in the methods of rationalists and to search for a different way to the substantial knowledge of reality. But it also poses certain problems for his own attempts to articulate a different approach. Specifically, it forces him to give formal logic a penultimate place in his thought. He cannot begin his philosophy of consciousness with a logical "proof" for the ground of his knowledge; for such a proof would have to be presented in the language of discursive reasoning, thus making his work appear to be no less of a subjective construction than that of anyone else. To avoid this problem, Schelling returns to a pre-Cartesian understanding of how philosophical study must begin: it must begin with an unprovable hypothesis, a presupposition, which is then tested for its ability to clarify the broadest range of human

¹⁶ Schelling, *System der gesamten Philosophie, Werke* I,6: 182 (I have modified Pfau's translation slightly).

experiences. Accordingly, Schelling claims that the notion of absolute identity is intelligible only as that which precedes all reflective or differentiating thought. It is intelligible only when “[t]he absolute light [*absolute Licht*]. . . strikes reason like a flash of lightening, so to speak, and remains luminous in reason as an eternal affirmation of knowledge [*und leuchtet in ihr fort als eine ewige Affirmation von Erkenntniß*].”¹⁷ This “luminosity” of consciousness does not become thematic in Schelling’s theory of consciousness. However, it is always presupposed when he stresses the pre-reflective or immediate way in which the absolute comes to “enlighten” the mind.

The following aspects of consciousness have emerged thus far in Schelling’s philosophical anthropology: (1) the intentionality of reflection; (2) the distancing quality of reflection, and (3) the luminosity of consciousness, by which the ground or absolute is received as an influx of “light.” Schelling encountered no significant resistance to the rationalist thinking associated with what I shall call the first and second structures of consciousness. However, the third structure was the chief source of contention for contemporary critics of the identity-philosophy, as noted in Hegel’s dismissal.¹⁸ Schelling’s appeal to the luminous or contemplative dimension of consciousness allowed some to think that his philosophy remains “naïve” and mystical. Furthermore, given the fact that Schelling also refers to the absolute as “God,” it led others to suspect that his thinking amounts to little more than a sophisticated attempt to make Christian theology a philosophical science.

To modern rationalists, Schelling’s claim that thought and being are absolutely identical before reflection may raise concerns that Schelling is playing a trick in a dubious attempt to achieve objective knowledge of reality. After all, is it not true that a highly reflective mode of consciousness is evident when Schelling articulates his central claim about the absolute? But Schelling would insist that the reflection involved governs only the articulation of the absolute in speech. In this

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, I,6: 155.

¹⁸ To speak of “structures” of consciousness is to define general types of experiences.

articulation, Schelling is using language in its highest and most easily misunderstood aspect. He uses language to point beyond itself, back to the fundamentally inarticulate nature of experience. At one point he complains that “if someone should demand that we communicate the intellectual intuition [of the absolute identity] to him, this would be the same as to demand that reason be communicated to him. The absence of the intellectual intuition proves only that in him reason has not yet reached the transparency of self-knowledge. Intellectual intuition is never anything particular, but is precisely and unconditionally universal.”¹⁹ Thus, Schelling would maintain that any attempt to refute the identity-philosophy through discursive logic reveals only logical problems, rather than ontological ones. To substantiate this point one must consider exactly how, in Schelling’s account of the matter, the absolute comes to be known and symbolized at all.

In its use of the subject-object distinction, reflective consciousness is an exclusively temporal and spatial type of thinking. Its logical truths are structured around “moments” and “steps” of differentiated thought processes. But Schelling argues that there is more to human consciousness than its capacity for perceiving objects in space and time. Humans can also come to know that the reality of experience reveals an eternal and non-spatial (dimension), where eternity is not understood as an extremely long time but, properly speaking, as the absence of time *per se*. Schelling occasionally describes this capacity of the soul with the Platonic term for re-collection: *anamnesis*.²⁰

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, I,6: 154.

²⁰ Schelling typically uses the term *Erinnerung* for Platonic remembrance (Cf. *Werke* I,6: 186). However, in his 1827 lectures *Zur Geschichte der neueren Philosophie*, Schelling summarized the fundamental practice of philosophy, contrasting his own way to that of Fichte, by writing the following: “The individual I finds in its consciousness only, as it were, the monuments, the memorials of that path [the path to self-consciousness], not the path itself. But for that very reason it is the task of science, indeed of the primal science, philosophy, to make that I of consciousness come to itself, i.e., into consciousness, *with consciousness*. Or: it is the task of philosophy that the I of consciousness should *itself* cover the whole path from the beginning of its being-outside-itself [in the unconscious dimension of nature] to the highest consciousness—with consciousness. Philosophy is, as such, nothing but an *anamnesis* [*Anamnese*], a remembrance for the I of what it has done and suffered in its general (its pre-individual [or substantial]) being, a result which is in agreement with familiar Platonic views” (*Werke* I,10: 94-5; I have followed Bowie’s translation [1994, p. 110]).

He says that Plato understood well that the ideas, in his particular sense of the term, are not constructed by the human mind; rather, they are the instructors of the mind. These instructors structure (the human) mind, making it what it is. According to Schelling, Kant was unable to understand this point due to his unquestioned belief in the substantial difference between noumena and phenomena. His “entire philosophy is guided by reflection,” and this feature of his thought causes him to misunderstand the Platonic conception of ideas as “but a mystical exaggeration for which Plato begs our indulgence.” Kant hopes that Plato’s fall into mysticism will be “replaced by humbler terms that will prove more adequate to the nature of the matter.” But Kant’s desire for humility results, according to Schelling, in the arrogant suspicion that all but moral ideas are constructs of the subjective ego. Even worse, again in Schelling’s account of the matter, Kant is unable to substantiate his choice of moral ideas as the sole constituents of the mind’s essential structure. His choice must appear to be completely arbitrary to minds dominated by reflective consciousness.

To correct these problems, Schelling argues against the presupposition that the human ego is a substantial ground of knowledge. He refers to this presupposition as that “vain habit of selfhood [*eitlen Trieb der Selbstheit*], which converts everything into *its* product.”²¹ He emphasizes that all true differentiation must presuppose the absolute and substantial identity of what has been divided by thought. He says that the absolute must be understood as both formal (perceived by the mind alone) and real (pertaining to “objects” of sense perception).²² The basic claim that Schelling attempts to make can be translated into the language of common sense. In effect, he asks his readers to recall the following points from experience: Every human being lives in a meaningful and mysterious world before he or she begins to interpret or differentiate the “world” and its many

²¹ Schelling, *System der gesamten Philosophie, Werke* I,6: 185-7.

²² *Ibid.*, 146.

“things.” All consciously human life begins without reflective self-consciousness. Stated positively, consciousness precedes self-consciousness. Accordingly, the latter is no ground upon which an absolute system of knowledge could ever be built. Schelling writes: “In truth, there does not ever nor anywhere exist a subject, a self, or any object or nonself. To say: ‘I’ know or ‘I’ am knowing is already the *proton pseudos*. ‘I’ know nothing, or *my* knowledge, to the extent that it is *mine*, is no true knowledge at all. Not ‘I’ know, but only the *All* [*das All*] knows in me, if the knowledge that I consider my own is to be a true knowledge.”²³ This claim recalls the similar point that Voegelin interprets from Schelling’s aphorisms on reason.²⁴ In its failure to bridge the (self-imposed) gap between appearances and reality, Schelling argues that synthetic reflection does not attain the status of what is properly called reason. He has little regard for the “natural reason” of Enlightenment philosophers and theologians alike. Instead, when Schelling speaks of reason he emphasizes the self-affirmation of the absolute in human consciousness, a primordial (*ursprünglich*) state of mind in which the affirmed and that which affirms are one.²⁵ “Hence,” he concludes, “the fundamental law of reason and of all knowledge, to the extent that it is rational knowledge, is the law of identity or the proposition $A=A$.”²⁶

Schelling uses many words as synonyms for the absolute. One word he does not use in this way is “nonbeing [*Nichtseyn*].” He argues that it is impossible to think of a negation as though it were the differentiating force in reality.²⁷ Nothing does nothing, least of all can it allow one to

²³ *Ibid.*, 140. In his later work, Schelling occasionally uses the Platonic term $\tau\acute{o}\ \pi\acute{\alpha}\nu$ as an equivalent symbol to his *All* (Cf., *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Werke* II,3: 174).

²⁴ Cf., *supra*, 97-9.

²⁵ Schelling, *System der gesamten Philosophie, Werke* I,6: 142-3, 148.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 145.

²⁷ A noteworthy example of the attempt to use a negation as the substantive differentiating force in reality may be found in Derrida’s “inscription” of the term “*la différance*.” Derrida’s deconstruction of “reality” uses this term in an attempt to maintain that no knowledge can ever become “present” in human consciousness, since consciousness is always already different/deferred (spatially and temporally) from the transcendent ground (egological or ontological) upon which it would have to base its cognitive claims. No such “ground” is ever present to human consciousness, Derrida maintains, therefore no knowledge is possible. See Jacques

understand the order of apparent differences between things. In short, the concept of nothing cannot be used to describe anything substantive in a rational philosophy. Any attempt to describe the absolute as nonbeing reveals only that the deconstructive thinker is still trapped in a Kantian-Hegelian, distinctively modern, and strictly reflective mode of thinking.²⁸ Schelling explains why the absolute cannot be conceived as a negation:

If the opposition of the subjective and the objective was the point of departure and the absolute merely the product, to be posited only after the fact by way of an annihilation of the opposition, the absolute itself would be a mere negation, namely, the negation of a difference of which we would not know whence it comes and why precisely this should serve, by way of its negation, to demonstrate the absolute [as non-being]. The absolute, then, would not be a *position* but merely a negative idea, a product of synthetic thought, or as some people still believe, of the synthesizing imagination, and quite clearly a mediate [*mittelbarer*] rather than the immediate [*unmittelbarer*] object of cognition.

To underscore the immediacy of the absolute, Schelling uses the term “being [*Seyn*]” as one of its synonyms. Nonbeing is understood only as a reflective product of analytical thought. Nonbeing is only relative to the being of the absolute. “Precisely this Being and this relative nonbeing of the particular in the universe constitute the seed of all finitude.”²⁹ Schelling’s use of the term “being”

Derrida, “Différance” in *Margins of Philosophy*, Alan Bass, trans., (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986), 1-27.

²⁸ Careful consideration of the contemplative origin of Schelling’s identity-philosophy makes it possible to draw a sharper line between Schelling’s absolute and Derrida’s *différance* than others have been prone to do. In an otherwise excellent account of this discussion, Andrew Bowie tends to see too many similarities between Schelling and Derrida, due to the fact that the function of the absolute and *différance* is similar in both thinkers. See Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy* (London: Routledge, 1993), 67-75.

²⁹ Schelling, *System der gesamten Philosophie, Werke* I,6: 163-4; 181. This substantial point about negations is not relinquished in Schelling’s later work. He consistently accepts the language of the ancient Greeks, specifically that of Aristotle, for its ability to distinguish between contradictory and contrary types of negation by means of “appropriate particles.” When Schelling speaks of nonbeing as one of the potencies, he still retains an awareness of its tension to being. Thus, he explains, “non-being [*nicht Seyn*] (μη εἶναι) does not signify nothing at all [*Nichtseyn*] (οὐκ εἶναι)....The mere privation of being [*Veraubung des Seyns*] does not exclude the ability to be [*seynkönnen*]. Pure ability to be [*Reines können*], as we have defined the simple subject, does not signify *Nichtseyn*” (Schelling, *Philosophie der Mythologie, Werke* II,1: 288-9; also see II,2: 32f. God is the “subject” of these passages.). Schelling’s use of negations remains contrary, rather than the contradictory type which Derrida has attempted to use in his appeals to *différance* as the *Prius* of all reality and experience.

Tilliette has offered a conflicting interpretation of Schelling’s later use of negation. He contends that Schelling’s *Prius* is described in contradictory terms (as οὐκ ὄν), so that Schelling can convey the sense that

does not make him an “essentialist” in the common sense of the word. Postmodern criticisms of essentialism focus on the claim that being has been constructed by acts of reflective consciousness. Schelling’s use of the term does not fall legitimately within the scope of this critique.³⁰

2. IDENTITY-PHILOSOPHY, FREEDOM AND POLITICS: THE TENSIONS OF EXISTENCE

Once the substantial identity preceding phenomenal differences has come to light in the *anamnesis* of Schelling’s theoretical science, the question may arise as to how this “objectivity” of reason may be used in light of the fact that reflective thinking tends to dominate in practical and political matters. In other words, does (or could) Schelling’s re-establishment of the universality of reason yield a threatening political “totality,” as criticized by Levinas and others?³¹ Could it result perhaps even in the formation of a totalitarian State that could devise practical applications for the oppression of minorities based on the homogeneity of its reason? Schelling would insist that his description of the totality (*das All*) could not truly form the basis for a totalitarian State. But on what grounds?

Schelling claims that only one thing can be known objectively by human beings, that is to say, with complete impartiality: “God, or the absolute, is the only immediate object of knowledge

“the creation does not proceed simply from the concept of God, but from his will.” See X. Tilliette, *Schelling. Une philosophie en devenir* (Paris: Vrin, 1970), 89. This is certainly an accurate account of Schelling’s ultimate, descriptive aim. But Tilliette’s philological point breaks unnecessarily with Schelling’s Aristotelian language. Schelling himself says that the *Prius* can be understood only as a contrary type of negation, and he describes this with the following identification of terms: Δυνάμει ὄν = μὴ ὄν (*Cf.*, II,1: 289 n. 1). The reference Schelling gives for this identification is to Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* (IV,4). Tilliette’s point is also unnecessary when considered in light of the logic of Schelling’s potencies. What might be described as Schelling’s potentialization of being already accounts for the dynamics of a divine will, resulting in creation, and for equivocal experiences of human willing in consciousness.

³⁰ This point has already been suggested by Voegelin’s analysis of Schelling’s “ontology” (*Cf.*, *supra*, 88-93, 99). This discussion will be rejoined in the next chapter with an exegesis of Schelling’s dialectical presentation of the *Potenzenlehre* in individual experience and the order of world history.

³¹ See Emmanuel Levinas, *Totality and Infinity: An Essay on Exteriority*, Alphonso Lingis, trans., (Pittsburgh: Duquesne University Press, 1992).

[*der einzige unmittelbare Gegenstand der Erkenntniß*].”³² Since the absolute or God is not a human construct, it is impossible for any individual to bring the central teaching of the identity-philosophy into service for parochial ends. Once “I” reflectively disassociate “myself” from the All, “my” thinking and speech—in short, “my” knowledge of particular things—becomes merely subjective. At best, “I” could speak for the All. But this could not be done rationally, according to Schelling. “My” prophecy would yield an inadmissible type of subjectivity. For the same reason, the absolute “in” human consciousness cannot become an Archimedean point from which “I” could turn to survey the expanse of reality objectively laid out beneath “my” feet. The knowledge of finite things in the natural world is based, Schelling argues, only on partial or “finite representation [*endliche Vorstellen*].” It yields “no absolute affirmation of what is known.” This point is true, he maintains, even though “nothing is *outside* of God.”³³ But this point can be substantiated only by theoretical intelligence or contemplation. It has no practical application beyond itself. Finally, what is true for “myself” is also true for any other human being.³⁴ No one can truly put words into the mouth of God, Being, the *Geist*, or any other supposedly absolute agent in historico-political reality. The attempt to do so reveals that one has not properly understood the unconditional nature of the absolute to which Schelling’s language points. All use or control of another person or thing results in a mediated, subjective break from the substantial immediacy of the absolute. Schelling insists that the objectivity of reason cannot be used for anything beyond the reorientation of individual souls to their common divine ground. This reorientation results only in personal felicity. Once the notion of absolute identity is correctly understood, “the subject can rejoice in the divine to the extent that it has espoused the universal.”³⁵

³² Schelling, *System der gesamten Philosophie, Werke* I,6: 151; also 162.

³³ *Ibid.*, 170, 169.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 154.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 152.

As noted in Voegelin's discussion of Schellingian politics, the central teaching of the identity-philosophy would have public significance only if a considerable number of people could successfully make the felicitous "inner return" and begin to understand the commonality of their humanity. If this were to occur, then the *demos* that rules in a democracy would know itself to be substantial. It would be a republic (*res publica*), a truly public and objective polity beyond the subjectivities of its private members. Neither Schelling nor Voegelin held out any great hopes that this state would ever occur in political reality. At best, they conceded, a good political order can do no more than approximate the like-mindedness (*homonoia*), as Voegelin often describes it, that may stem from the objectivity of reason. It is relatively easy to understand why only an approximation of objectivity is possible in political reality. A political leader, as with anyone else, can know only one thing objectively: God is God ($A=A$). A political leader can say only two things objectively: (1) God is God; and (2) You need to realize this for yourselves. Nothing follows immediately from these points that could inform the daily need to solve problems caused by too much reflective differentiation of things in the world and too little contemplation of that from which they have been separated.

The central features of Schelling's identity-philosophy may be summarized in the following propositions: (1) Consciousness is structured by the immediate "light" of the absolute and mediated or reflective responses to this contemplative experience of order; (2) the fundamental error in all knowledge is the presupposition that subjects and objects are substantially different; (3) the only true presupposition yielding universal ("objective") knowledge is that subjects and objects are substantially identical, and this is all that the human mind can know objectively ($A=A$); (4) objective knowledge cannot be used for partisan purposes; theory has no practical application beyond the felicitous order it brings to the contemplative soul.

Schelling never abandoned the central features of his identity-philosophy, although he did qualify them significantly in later works. In his work *On the Essence of Human Freedom* (1809), Schelling begins to give the concept of freedom a central place in his thought. One of the apparent limitations of the identity-philosophy is that it does not account for how an actual human being tends to experience life as a mixture of necessary and contingent events. Schelling himself perceived this to be a limitation. In his lectures *On the History of Modern Philosophy*, he clarifies his earlier work on the philosophy of absolute identity: “This philosophy. . . should have acknowledged that it is a science wherein there is no mention of *existence* or of what *actually exists*, or of knowledge in this sense either. It treated only the relations its object takes on in mere thought.”³⁶ Despite this qualification, the principles of the identity-philosophy remain in Schelling’s later works. His critique of the attempt to reduce consciousness to its capacity for reflection remains the basic presupposition of his “negative” philosophy.³⁷ This feature distinguishes Schelling’s rational philosophy from that of Kant, Fichte and Hegel—among others.

Beyond the identity-philosophy of 1804, Schelling describes the absolute as “eternal freedom” (A⁰), the purest God (as discussed in Voegelin’s analysis), which freely differentiates itself in the potencies of nature and produces a discernable order in the history of human consciousness.³⁸

³⁶ Schelling, *Zur Geschichte der neueren Philosophie, Werke* I,10: 125. This quote is specifically in reference to an earlier version of the identity-philosophy, one which posited substantial identity at the end of a lengthy treatment of nature-philosophy (*Naturphilosophie*) and the philosophy of spirit. But it applies equally well to the 1804 philosophy of absolute identity, in which the notion of substantial identity comes first. Either way Schelling eventually decided that this type of thinking yields only a “negative” form of rationalism, which cannot account for the world in its existence.

³⁷ This claim is in agreement with Manfred Frank’s isolation of the “fundamental thought” that unifies Schelling’s entire philosophical project, *viz.*, that “being or absolute identity is irreducible to the happening of reflection.” See Manfred Frank, *Eine Einführung in Schellings Philosophie* (Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1985), 8. Frank is important among German scholars as one whose interpretive work has persuaded many that a reassessment of Schelling’s later philosophy is in order.

³⁸ By mentioning the principled continuity of the identity-philosophy in Schelling’s later works, I do not wish to diminish the profound change that came over Schelling’s thinking when he started to bring freedom more directly into the scope of his analyses. In his redescription of the absolute as eternal freedom, Schelling allows that the divine life is at least capable of substantial change or development. This forms the basis of his

Eternal freedom forms the basis or hypothetical *Prius* for Schelling's "positive philosophy" of existence, his philosophy of historical revelation. It allows him to describe the concrete particulars of natural (mythic) and historical (revelatory) types of experience as actualizations of the divine potencies. His positive philosophy attempts to account for the universe in its dynamic existence, in addition to the static, formal essence that comes to light in negative philosophy. A true philosopher, Schelling maintains, will never use exclusively negative or positive types of thinking. All true philosophy must be able to account for both essential order and existential history. Philosophy *per se* is the unified science of order and history, essence and existence. However, the accent in Schelling's later thought falls on the positive philosophy of historical existence, where the philosopher attempts to understand God not as a self-identical essence or regulative idea, but as an expressed or effective existence.

Before turning to consider how Voegelin draws upon Schelling's identity-philosophy in his own philosophy of consciousness, a concluding point needs to be addressed. Where, one might ask, does a real human being fall within Schelling's mystical vision of the All? Schelling's answer can be stated simply: in the middle. This is how he describes the human soul's place within the order of reality to a lay audience in his *Stuttgart Private Lectures*: "Man stands in the middle [*in der Mitte*] between the nonbeing of nature and the absolute being=God."³⁹ This middle position indicates that one aspect of human consciousness appears to be free from God and nature, speaking colloquially, thus a mixture of freedom and necessity. It also implies that humanity has a definite share in both, that "[e]verything divine is human, and everything human divine. This phrase of the ancient

process theology of history. The notion of a process in the divine life itself—its tensional freedom to conceal and reveal itself—is what substantiates the claim that history is marked by essentially different epochs (of which more later). The notion of a process in the divine ground itself is something Schelling flatly denied in earlier works (Cf. *Bruno oder über das göttliche und natürliche Prinzip der Dinge. Ein Gespräch* [1802], *Werke* I,4: 303; and *System der gesamten Philosophie* [1804], *Werke* I,6: 170).

³⁹ Schelling, *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen*, *Werke* I,7: 458.

Hippocrates, taken from the depths of life, was and still is the key to the greatest discoveries in the realm of God and nature." Schelling says that nature, more specifically, is that which "unfolds itself more and more into a substance which is not merely corporeal and not merely spiritual but is between the two." This substance "between" body and spirit is the self-reflective aspect of human consciousness. "Man is really the connection point of the entire universe, and one can thus far indeed say that really everything was envisaged in him." More specifically, Schelling says that the human will is that which holds the position of the between: "the will operates only as with an alien intelligence, of which it is not itself master, an intermediate state between the complete night of consciousness [A¹ or (A=B)] and reflective mind [A³]." ⁴⁰

The middle position of the human soul does not become thematic in Schelling's writings. He uses this terminology in public only when addressing a lay audience. But a similar notion is presupposed throughout his later writings, where the concrete reality of human existence is always described as caused by a tensional play of divine potencies.⁴¹ It is relatively clear why Schelling did not conceptualize human consciousness as restricted to the "middle" ground between God and nature. This conceptualization could easily obscure the identity of the soul's unconscious depth with its divine ground. It could force one to speak only in relational terms about the soul's contact with the fundamental substance of the universe.⁴² Once contact with substance is understood only as a relation, the reflective divisions between soul and soul, soul and world, soul and God could easily return, taking philosophical discussion back to the total ignorance of noumenal reality proclaimed

⁴⁰ Schelling, *Die Weltalter, Werke* I,8: 291, 282, 297, 337.

⁴¹ For example, Schelling raises the issue of human freedom from God and nature briefly in his *Philosophie der Offenbarung*. He says that the ability to distinguish ourselves from both God and nature is a result of the Fall (*Cf., Werke* II,3: 353-4). Schelling's account of the Fall, the condition of the possibility for God's self-revelation in history, will be discussed at length in the next chapter.

⁴² I do not wish to imply that Schelling had no use for relational language in his later anthropology. He frequently speaks of the soul's "participation" in the divine potencies and of relations between the potencies themselves. But his relational language, as part of his positive philosophy of existence, is always related to his particular understanding of substantial identity, which forms the basis of his negative philosophy.

by Kant and the reflective philosophy proposed for bridging this divide by Hegel. Once the language of relation is introduced substantially, and the notion of substantial identity is lost, the way is prepared for a return to the predominance of reflective thought. This problem does not arise in Schelling's later anthropology. He retains the notion of substantial identity in his descriptions of God as the absolute *Prius* of immediate experience.⁴³ But he also limits this identity by describing it as always already beyond consciousness.⁴⁴ Hence, no "gnosticism" can be ascribed to Schelling's later anthropology. His work reveals an "objective" order that can be grasped in philosophical contemplation alone, but not used for practical purposes by any individual as a private possession of absolute truth.

3. VOEGELIN'S LATER ANTHROPOLOGY: CONSCIOUSNESS AND ITS GROUND

To demonstrate the importance of Schelling's philosophy of consciousness in Voegelin's mature thought, I will compare to the preceding analysis two texts that Voegelin published explicitly on the theory of consciousness: one preceding his American publishing career, "On the Theory of Consciousness" (1943), and the other from the end of his life, Chapter One from *In Search of Order* (1985). These texts frame Voegelin's mature discussions in the philosophy of consciousness. Interpreting them, in addition to brief remarks from intervening works, will reveal that there are no substantial changes in his theory of consciousness throughout this entire period, and that his thought continues to bear traces of Schelling's philosophy of absolute identity.

⁴³ Much later in his life, one still finds Schelling defending his particular philosophy of identity in contrast to the "negative" rationality of Fichte and Hegel. See lectures III, IV, and V of his *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, *Werke* II,3: 51-93. The pre-reflective (*ursprünglich*) constitution of identity "in" human consciousness is also defended in the *Philosophie der Mythologie*, *Werke* II,2: 118ff.

⁴⁴ Specifically, the divine *Prius* is redescribed as "the immediate potential to be," which is "before being or that which will be" (*Philosophie der Offenbarung*, *Werke* II,3: 207).

“On the Theory of Consciousness”

In 1943, Voegelin wrote an extended letter to Alfred Schütz concerning the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl and the development of a theory of consciousness intended to address aspects of experience unaccounted for by phenomenology.⁴⁵ This letter is important as an account of the way in which Voegelin’s thought was oriented by Schelling’s shortly before the beginning of his publishing career in America. It allows one to understand the theory of consciousness presupposed in *The New Science of Politics* (1952) and the first three volumes of *Order and History* (1956-57).⁴⁶ The letter is comprised of three parts, written in the following order: (1) a critical discussion of Husserl’s phenomenology, based on his *Krisis der Europäischen Wissenschaften* (1936) and *Méditations Cartésiennes* (1931); (2) an account of “anamnetic experiments,” recollections of formative experiences from Voegelin’s childhood; and (3) “On the Theory of Consciousness,” Voegelin’s attempt to develop a theory of consciousness that corrects problems in phenomenology.⁴⁷ The last part of the letter bears directly on the central theme of this chapter. It was written at the same time that Voegelin was researching and writing his “Last Orientation” for the *History of Political Ideas*. Several passages reflect formulations he would later use in his chapter on

⁴⁵ For discussion of Schütz’s critical yet sympathetic reception of Voegelin, during their long-standing correspondence, see Helmut R. Wagner, *Alfred Schütz: An Intellectual Biography* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983), chapter 12, “Eric Voegelin: Friend in Philosophical Adversity.”

⁴⁶ Voegelin says that the 1943 correspondence with Schütz articulates the theoretical presuppositions governing these works (Cf., *Anam.*^{GER}, 8).

⁴⁷ These texts were first published in *Anamnesis: Zur Theorie der Geschichte und Politik* (München: Piper & Co. Verlag, 1966), 21-76. I have determined the order in which these texts were written by comparing the German and English versions of *Anamnesis*. The first part of the letter, which directly concerns the thought of Husserl, is dated 20 September, 1943. The second part, on “Anamnetic Experiments,” is dated 25 October—7 November, 1943 (Cf., *Anam.*^{GER}, 36, 76). In the English translation of *Anamnesis* (1978), Voegelin says that the third part of the letter, “On the Theory of Consciousness,” was written immediately after the second part, thus in November 1943 (Cf., *Anam.*, 13). Re-establishing the order in which these texts were written suggests how the letter is to be interpreted as a whole. First, Voegelin calls attention to problems for a theory of consciousness that arise from a textual analysis of Husserl’s writings. Second, he calls attention to problems for phenomenology with reference to the “history” of an actual human life, his own. Finally, he attempts to formulate a theory of consciousness which addresses the problems of history, both personal and social, for which phenomenology had not provided a sufficient account.

“Phenomenalism.” More to the point, however, the role of Schelling’s *Potenzenlehre*, which Voegelin calls a “process theology [*Prozeßtheologie*],” is mentioned for its ability to address problems in the theory of consciousness with which Voegelin had struggled in his first book, *On the Form of the American Mind* (1928).

In the prefatory remarks to the second part of the letter, the section that now bears the title “Anamnetic Experiments,” Voegelin gives a helpful summary of the presuppositions that he will develop in the theory of consciousness that follows:

- (1) Consciousness “is not constituted as a stream within the I.”
- (2) Consciousness—in its finite, “intentional function”—transcends into the world, but “this type of transcendence is only one among several and must not be made the central theme of a theory of consciousness.”
- (3) “[T]he experiences of the transcendence of consciousness into the body, the external world, the community, history, and the ground of being are givens in the biography of consciousness and thus antecede the systematic reflection on consciousness.”
- (4) “[S]ystematic reflection operates with these experiences or, at least, in its operations sets out from these experiences.”
- (5) “[R]eflection is a further event in the biography of consciousness that may lead to clarification about its problems and, when reflection is turned in the direction of meditation, to the ascertainment of existence; but. . . it never is a radical beginning of philosophizing or can lead to such a beginning” (*Anam.*, 36).

These propositions suggest two themes that are central to Schelling’s philosophy of consciousness: (1) the derivative nature of the ego, and (2) the secondary importance of reflective consciousness in philosophical accounts of order. Furthermore, in all of his later work, Voegelin frequently uses the term *anamnesis* to describe the primary function of consciousness with respect to its knowledge of reality and itself. His use of the term implies, as it did in Schelling, that reality is not “constructed” by a completely self-transparent ego in reflective modes of consciousness; rather, the order of reality is “remembered” when formative experiences of an individual’s consciousness are re-collected, thus revealing the order (and disorder) of its discreet existence. The

formative experiences to which Voegelin appeals do not originate in self-conscious reflection. They occur spontaneously, in the immediacy of an actual life. The formative experiences become “objects” of consciousness only upon subsequent reflection, when they are intentionally brought into memory or, as it were, assert themselves. Thus, Voegelin is led to speak of a dual aspect of *anamnesis*: one in which a memory is brought to mind, the other in which a memory comes to mind (*Cf., Anam., 37*). This dual aspect of *anamnesis* plays an important part in his later distinction between two modes of consciousness as a “meditative complex.”

In “On the Theory of Consciousness,” Voegelin says that his remarks on consciousness “contain biographical materials” that “report on the results of anamnestic experiences,” the experiences articulated in the second part of the letter. He says that the motive for interpreting these experiences “came from a feeling of discontent with the results of those philosophical investigations that have as their object an analysis of the inner consciousness of time.” He notes that this focus became central only in the nineteenth century and continues into his present: “Philosophizing about time and existence today occupies the place that was held by meditation before thinking in Christian categories dissolved.” Voegelin’s discontent is occasioned specifically by the perceived failures of Hodgson, Brentano, Husserl, Peirce, William James, and Santayana to deliver a phenomenological “description” of perception and consciousness with the categories of “thatness and whatness, pure experience, act and reflection, etc.” Upon closer inspection, Voegelin says that he found these attempts to be based, not on a completely empirical theory of consciousness, but on the “speculative construction of an experience that obviously could not be grasped with the conceptual apparatus of description.”⁴⁸ Even Husserl’s later terminological refinements, of *retention* and *protention*, “did not get beyond the construction of a subtle apparatus of equivocations” (*Anam., 14*). Voegelin found

⁴⁸ Voegelin conducted his analysis of these attempts in his chapter on “Time and Existence,” in *On the Form of the American Mind, CW 1: 23-63*.

the central problem in all of these attempts to lie in the non-empirical reduction of consciousness to its ability to perceive merely a temporal "flow." The flow of consciousness was described by phenomenologists with only partial correctness when they analyzed the auditory perception of a tone. Voegelin does not deny that there is "a phenomenon of 'flow.'" But he claims that this "flow" amounts only to a "limit experience [*Grenzerfahrung*]," which comes to light "under the specific conditions of giving oneself to a simple sensuous perception." The flow is "a phenomenon of limit [*Grenzphänomen*]," but Voegelin maintains that "consciousness as a whole does not flow" (*Ibid.*, 18, 19; *Anam.^{GIER}*, 42). "[I]t is the function of human consciousness *not* to flow but rather to constitute the spaceless and timeless world of meaning, sense, and the soul's order" (*Ibid.*, 16). What does he mean by this claim that the substance of consciousness is not part of a temporal flow?

Consider listening to the striking of a bell. The tone's initial intensity is heard to dissipate gradually. To phenomenologists, in Voegelin's account of the matter, experiences such as this reveal that consciousness is structured only by the temporal flow of successive moments.⁴⁹ For Voegelin, however, different consequences follow from the analysis of this experience. First, he says, the perception of a tone does not reveal the consciousness of time: "[T]hat which is described on the occasion of an auditory perception is not the consciousness of time but precisely the consciousness of the perception of a tone, a tone that has an objective structure determined in turn by the structure of man's faculty of perception, the noetic structure in Husserl's sense" (*Ibid.*, 15). Second, the perception of a tone does reveal that in order to arrive at an adequate conception of time-

⁴⁹ In Husserl's words, time is "the universal form of all egological genesis." The universe of one's subjective processes "is a universe of compossibilities only in the universal *unity-form of the flux*, in which all particulars have their respective places as processes that flow within it." Husserl says that consciousness is structured entirely by what he calls "intentionality," a word which "signifies nothing else than this universal fundamental property of consciousness: to be consciousness *of something*; as a *cogito*, to bear within itself its *cogitatum*." See Edmund Husserl, *Cartesian Meditations*, Dorion Cairns, trans., (Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1993), 75, 33.

consciousness one must have recourse to another dimension of consciousness to describe the event, which, at a given point, transcends the temporal flow perceived by intentionality. This other dimension of consciousness is the one for which phenomenology had not provided an account. Voegelin describes it with what may appear to be some equivocations of his own. Before Schelling's name is mentioned explicitly, he alludes to a dimension of consciousness based on limit-experiences of "meditation" and "illumination." These experiences, he says, are conducive to experiences of "transcendence." The type of transcendence Voegelin has in mind is not restricted to experiences of a characteristically religious nature. He says that even phenomenological analysis may serve to illustrate the point that consciousness is more than the conscious flow perceived by the intentionality of consciousness:

A speculation about the stream of consciousness may serve as a substitute for meditation because it, too, conduces to transcendence; both processes have the function to transcend consciousness, one into the body, the other into the ground of being; both processes lead to a "vanishing point," in that the transcendence itself cannot be a datum of consciousness. The processes carry one only to the limit and make possible an instantaneous experience of the limit, which empirically may last only a few seconds (*Ibid.*, 18).

Perhaps the best way to bring this other dimension of consciousness to light is to recollect and reexamine the example of the bell, paying greater attention to what actually grounds consciousness and serves as the condition of the possibility for the experience of a temporal flow. The analysis of this experience should lead consciousness, as Voegelin says, to transcend itself "into the body."

The bell is struck. The tone is perceived in consciousness and appears to flow. The tone's initial intensity is heard to slide into the "past," however, only when changes in its pitch and volume are compared with the memory of the tone's initial intensity (*Cf. ibid.*, 15). In order to experience this "flow" at all, therefore, one must continually relate the "moments" of the tone's dissipation back to previous "present" "instances" when it was comparatively more intense. In other words, one must mark time and compare differences between particular moments in the experience. But here is the

problem. What can mark time in a consciousness thoroughly immersed in a temporal flow? The comparison of “present moments” definitely occurs, producing the experience of a flow, but where there is no difference—*i.e.*, in a consciousness structured only by time—it becomes difficult to understand how this comparison itself can take place. During the actual experience, the continual comparison of the bell’s initial intensity and subsequent dissipation occurs only unconsciously. This unconscious function is intimately connected with what might be described as an unintentional aspect of memory. Thus, one aspect of the memory—that which unintentionally marks time and compares differences between times—is always immediately unconscious in each of the “present” moments of the actual experience. This aspect of memory has and uses the ability, as it were, to jump between remembered “moments” in order to make the comparisons; so it cannot be understood as completely bound by time. Voegelin observes: “the *ordering* of the momentary image, in the dimension created by illumination, into the succession of a process requires experiences of processes transcending consciousness. The ‘present,’ thus, seems to be indeed not directly experienceable; rather, it is the result of the interpretation of the momentary image as we resort to the knowledge of the history [*i.e.*, the memory] of our bodily existence and the dating of this history through references to events in the external spatio-temporal world” (*Ibid.*, 31).

Of course, memory is partially structured by intentionality. One can intentionally remember something. But intentionality does not exhaust the whole of memory. Some memories arise unintentionally. Voegelin is led to speak of a dual aspect of memory when the temporal categories of past and future are brought into consideration: “I do not remember something that lies ‘in the past,’ but I have a past because I can make present a completed process of consciousness—either through a deliberate effort of my attention or in less transparent processes of so-called ‘free associations.’ Past and future are the present illuminatory dimensions of the process in which the

energy center [of consciousness] is engaged" (*Ibid.*, 20).⁵⁰ The present immediacy of an experience is both "luminous" and a process "transcending consciousness," *i.e.*, the unconscious. This dimension of consciousness comes to light only in "anamnetic" experiences.

When Voegelin says that it is the function of consciousness "*not* to flow but rather to constitute the spaceless and timeless world of meaning, sense, and the soul's order," he is referring to this luminous, unconscious principle of order in consciousness. In other words, it is the unconscious eternity of the present which intersects and constitutes all conscious "points" on a derivative line of temporal succession. The "present" is therefore not a temporal category itself, but eternally different than time. It eludes the grasp of reflective or intentional consciousness during the immediacy of an actual experience. It can be brought to consciousness only in subsequent acts of reflection. But in these reflective acts all that comes to light is the limit experience of a tension between conscious acts intending objects and the unconscious constitution of intentionality. This is why terms such as "eternity" and the "unconscious" can appear to be little more than mystical fancies to minds dominated by the conventions of reflective thought.

Voegelin argues that reflection cannot bring the conscious self completely into self-transparency. The unconscious present always remains immediately unconscious. In other words, reflection does not allow consciousness to jump over its own shadow. Voegelin writes:

No "human" in his reflection on consciousness and its nature can make consciousness an "object" over against him; the reflection rather is an orientation within the space of consciousness by which he can push to the limit of consciousness but never cross those limits. Consciousness is given in the elemental sense that the systematic reflection on consciousness is a late event in the biography of the philosopher. The philosopher always lives in the context of his own history, the history of a human existence in the community and in the world (*Ibid.*, 33).

In other words, as discussed in the works of Schelling, consciousness always precedes self-conscious

⁵⁰ This notion recalls the distinction made by Thomas Aquinas between "active" and "passive" aspects of the "memorative power": (1) the syllogistic apprehension of a memory, and (2) the sudden recollection of a past event (*Cf.*, *Summa Theologica*, 1a.78.4).

reflection. The unconscious, eternal present is the condition of the possibility for the experience of a temporal "flow."

The sensuous perception of a tone "does not conduce to a better understanding of the problem of consciousness and time as a whole but only to an understanding of the roots of consciousness in the sphere of the body" (*Ibid.*, 16). The body comes to light as a "bottleneck. . . . through which the world is forced as it enters the order of consciousness." The natural constitution of the body structures some experiences of the world. But the meaning of these experiences can be discerned only when sensual images enter into a "spiritual realm, which has, at least directly, nothing to do with the flow of time" (*Ibid.*, 17, 15). If one's awareness of body-based consciousness "hypertrophies into the causation of consciousness by the body, then the radicalization and hyperbolization reveals an attitude that is to be characterized as morbid in the pneumato-pathological sense of Plato's *nosos*" (*Ibid.*, 17).

Phenomenology does not suffer from the problems of vulgar materialism. Its problems are different. Specifically, its attempt to explain time-consciousness only with the dimension of intentionality results, for Voegelin, in a denial of the plurality of experienced structures in consciousness. It is becoming clear that a purely intentional account of consciousness fails to take into consideration the constant presence of its unconscious ground. Voegelin explains:

Narrowing down the problem of consciousness to the flow and its [conscious] constitution is untenable if only because of its incompatibility with the phenomena of sleep, dreams, and the subconscious psychic processes. But even apart from this complex of problems, the reduction remains symptomatic of a doubtful hypertrophy of a correctly observed experience. . . . This hypertrophy implies a radical perversion of the facts as given in experience. In experience, consciousness with its structures, whatever they may be, is an antecedent given. The limit experience of "flowing," as demonstrated through the model of the perception of a tone, is possible only in a specific act of turning attention to that limit. It is not the consciousness of time that is constituted by the flow but rather the experience of the flow is constituted by consciousness, which itself is not flowing (*Ibid.*, 17-18).

Voegelin is aware that phenomenology, in its attempt to supplant the unconscious through reflective acts of consciousness, tends to appeal to an unconditional or transcendental "I" as the agent responsible for the constructing "reality." However, once again, when he turns to reflect on a specific experience, he discovers that no "I" is ever discernable as the primary agent in the alleged construction:

I "will" to get up from my chair and observe how the "willing" and the "getting up" proceed. I can clearly recognize the project of my "getting up," but what occurs between my decision and my actual getting up remains quite obscure. I do not know why I get up just at this moment and not a second later. Closely though I may observe the process, I can find only that at the actual getting up something, from a source inaccessible to me, makes me get up and that nothing of an "I" is discoverable in the act. This observation does not tell me anything about the determination or indetermination of acting; it merely indicates that the actual getting up does not occur in the form of "I." The "I" seems to me to be no given at all but rather a highly complex symbol for certain perspectives in consciousness (*Ibid.*, 19).

The "I" is discovered to be a derivative phenomenon, constituted in the same way as the experience of a temporal flow; for the conscious "I" rests upon an "inaccessible" ground of unconscious activity.⁵¹ In Schelling's words, the "I" is little more than a "vain habit."

Voegelin does not wish to give the impression that phenomenology needs to be dismissed *tout court*. He acknowledges that the transcendental turn has had certain merits: "Transcendentalism has had magnificent successes in the clarifications of consciousness-structures in which the objective order of the world is constituted" (*Ibid.*, 35). But he also notes that phenomenology emerged as part of "a 'reaction' against a spiritual crisis" in the West, the breakdown of Christian civilization and its history of metaphysics. The reactionary beginnings of phenomenology do not immediately

⁵¹ Voegelin's "anamnetic" account of the "present"—a meaningful symbol which, nonetheless, cannot be brought into self-presence by reflection—avoids the problems of presence in the "ontotheological determination of Being," as criticized by Heidegger and Derrida. See Jacques Derrida, "Différance," *op. cit.*, 16ff. Derrida also attempts to criticize the theory of consciousness in Husserlian phenomenology. But his criticism suffers from an inability to account for recollections as based in experiences of reality, because he commits the *proton pseudos* of presupposing substantial differences between human consciousness and the reality of which it is a part. By maintaining this presupposition, he perpetuates the rationalistic methods of the transcendental critique of consciousness and reality, which he intends completely to oppose.

discount its ability to clarify problems of consciousness during a time of spiritual crisis: "In such a situation, an attempt to begin anew is not only legitimate in the sense that an old symbolism cannot be honestly used when its value of communication has declined, but it is also the indispensable requirement for the development of a new, more adequate symbolism. Protesting against such a new beginning in the name of a tradition is nothing more than a symptom of spiritual sterility." Even so, Voegelin notes that some reactions are better than others, "and sometimes the reaction is worse than the tradition against which it critically reacts" (*Ibid.*, 34). Such is the case in Voegelin's final analysis of phenomenology:

The development of the transcendental critique down to Husserl is characterized by the dissolution not only of traditional symbolic systems but also by the exclusion of the underlying areas of experiences and problems from the orbit of philosophical reflection. It is the fate of symbols in the history of the mind that transparency turns to "appearance." But that the reality that they illuminated comes to be, if not downrightly denied, at any rate rejected as a motive of philosophizing, is a desperate move, a bankruptcy of philosophizing.

The relative successes of phenomenology have been marred by its inability to account for the experiences of transcendence to which Voegelin's own phenomenological analyses have begun to point: (1) consciousness cannot be understood as being structured completely by time; it is grounded by something that transcends time; (2) the "I" cannot be turned into a thoroughly conscious creator of reality; for this concept is always derived from an order of reality over which "I" have no ultimate control; and (3) consciousness is able to transcend itself not only into to the body, but also into the "ground of being," something which is categorically ignored by phenomenology. "The creation of the transcendental I as the central symbol of philosophy implies the destruction of the cosmic whole within which philosophizing becomes at all possible. The basic subjectivity of the egological sphere, Husserl's philosophical and nondiscussable ultimatum, is the symptom of a spiritual nihilism that still has merit as a reaction, but no more than that" (*Ibid.*, 35).

Two structures in Voegelin’s theory of consciousness have begun to emerge: consciousness and its unconscious ground. Voegelin begins to clarify these structures when he turns to consider what he understands to be a better protest against the spiritual crisis of the modern West—the process theology or *Potenzenlehre* of Schelling.⁵²

According to Voegelin, process theology is concerned with “developing a symbolic system that seeks to express the relations between consciousness, the transcending intraworldly classes of being, and the world-transcending ground of being, in the language of a process constructed as an immanent one.” Voegelin says that he is “inclined to believe [*geneigt zu glauben*]” that “the process-theological attempt and its expansion, a metaphysic that interprets the transcendence system of the world as the immanent process of a divine substance, is the only meaningful systematic philosophy” (*Ibid.*, 26-7; *Anam.* ^{GER}, 50-1). The distinctive feature of Schelling’s process theology, Voegelin says, is its ability to account for experiences of “transcendence in immanence” with a “comprehensible” language. Voegelin isolates the systematic starting point of this theology in Schelling’s formulation of the question: “Why is Something, why is there not rather Nothing?” Voegelin interprets this question by saying that “[e]very being implies the mystery of its existence over the abyss of a possible nonexistence.” He realizes that some will try to dismiss this notion as though it were based on meaningless speculation, “because the ‘Something’ in Schelling’s question is a formalized or idealized formula for the only finite something that can be experienced.” Once the idealized formula is discounted, finite things will be explained with recourse to the causalities of nature. And the objectors will contend that “[p]hilosophy is supposed to confine itself to the framework of finite, critical cognition. . . . Consciousness that is attentive to the content of the world including the givens of consciousness, can lift itself above finite experience only to a transcendental

⁵² Voegelin uses the terms “process theology” and *Potenzenlehre* synonymously (*Cf.*, *Anam.* ^{GER}, 50).

reflection on the structure of subjectivity, in which the objective order of things in the world is constituted" (*Anam.*, 27). In a way that recalls Schelling's partial acceptance of such objectivity gained in "negative philosophy," Voegelin says that this position is "immanently irrefutable." However, in a manner consistent with the theme of Schelling's "positive philosophy," Voegelin also says that the restriction of consciousness to the subjectivity of immanent experience does not hold true "in the general course of history." When considered in the light of historical experiences and their symbolic "differentiations" of reality, it becomes clear that human consciousness has evolved to the point where the denial of transcendent reality is presently inadmissible, *i.e.*, in a sound philosophy of human existence. The experiential discoveries of divine transcendence have occurred, in Greek philosophy and Judaeo-Christian revelation; so it is no longer possible for mature philosophers to speak only in terms of a purely immanent or "cosmological" understanding of reality and its ground.

It is now possible to resist this anachronistic thinking from "various sources, but ultimately it issues from two experiential complexes" (*Ibid.*, 27). Voegelin describes the first complex as that which is given "through man's experience of his own ontic structure and its relation to the world-immanent order of being." This is the intentional mode of consciousness that reflects on "objects" in the world, including the objective concepts of pure reason. But human consciousness "is not a process that occurs in the world side by side with other processes without contact with these processes other than [reflective] cognition; rather, it is based on animalic, vegetative, and inorganic being, and only on this basis is it consciousness of a human being" (*Ibid.*). It is possible to realize, through reflections on biological order, that most of one's life is lived as an unconscious participant in all of the realms of immanent being previously mentioned: "Speaking ontologically, consciousness finds in the order of being of the world no level which it does not also experience as its own foundation. In the 'basis-experience' of consciousness man presents himself as an epitome

of the cosmos, as a microcosm.”⁵³ In this reflective mode of consciousness it must be admitted that “we do not know in what this basis ‘really’ consists; all our finite experience is experience of levels of being in their differentiation; the nature of the cosmos is inexperienceable, whether the nexus of basis be the foundation of the vegetative on the inorganic, of the animalic on the vegetative, or of human consciousness on the animal body.” All that can be known to reflection is that “this basis exists,” and “there must be something common which makes possible the continuum of all of them in human existence” (*Ibid.*, 28). To account for what is common in the “intimate interrelationships” of immanent being, Voegelin introduces a second structure of consciousness: “The second experiential complex is the experience of meditation, at the climax of which the intention of consciousness is directed toward the contents of the world, not objectively, through the *cogitata*, but rather nonobjectively toward the transcendent ground of being” (*Ibid.*, 28-9).

The “considerations which lead to process theology” arise when consciousness is understood to have these two structures: (1) the capacity for intentional reflection on objects in the world; and (2) the capacity for being drawn beyond the partiality of an egological science toward the impartial view of the All, which is gained in experiences of “meditation.” These structures in consciousness are not understood to be autonomous entities. They are understood to be appearances of a substantial whole, a “meditative complex” of consciousness and the reality of which it is a part. Voegelin attempts to describe the intimacy of these structures in what might be called a process-theological anthropology:

If the levels of being in human existence are based on each other, if there is a parallelism of processes, if human existence is incorporated in the world spatio-temporally and causally, if finally there is in consciousness a reflection of the world, then the ontologist infers a

⁵³ This point is restated in *The New Science of Politics*. Voegelin writes: “Science starts from the prescientific existence of man, 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” (5).

background of substantive identity of the levels of being. The differentiation of the experienced levels of being can be made understandable only by interpreting it through the category of process as a series of phases in the unfolding of the identical substance that attains its illumination phase in human consciousness. The meditative complex of experiences in which the reality of the ground of being reveals itself then leads to the necessity of seeing the world-immanent process of being conditioned by a process in the ground of being (*Ibid.*, 29).

Both aspects of Schellingian philosophy are reproduced here: (1) the substantial identity of all things, gained in the meditative aspect of the identity-philosophy; and (2) the unfolding of the identical substance in his positive philosophy of history. Where Schelling spoke of substantial identity as the only "presupposition [*Voraussetzung*]" for philosophy,⁵⁴ Voegelin speaks of it as the necessary "hypothesis [*Hypothese*]" upon which a comprehensible philosophy of human existence must be based. Also like Schelling, Voegelin describes the knowledge of this unity as obtained beyond reflective consciousness. He offers further clarification of this point: "The substantive unity [*substantielle Einheit*] of human existence, which must be accepted as ontological hypothesis [*ontologische Hypothese*] for the understanding of consciousness as based in body and matter, is objectively inexperienceable. That does not mean, however, that there is no such thing. At any rate, the hypothesis is indispensable for grasping the 'ensemble' [*„Zusammen“*] of consciousness and bodily process in the total process of human existence" (*Anam.*, 31; *Anam. GER*, 55). The substantive unity is inexperienceable when considered in the "objective" light of reflection. But it is experienced in meditation.

Voegelin does not have much to say about meditation in this relatively early work. But he says a great deal about the anamnetic results of meditative experiences. It is from within this complex of problems that "Schelling's basic question [*Grundfrage*] appears in a different light." In brief, Voegelin finds that Schelling's philosophical orientation effectively transcends the narrow

⁵⁴ Schelling, *System der gesamten Philosophie, Werke* I,6: 137.

restrictions placed on philosophy by post-Kantian epistemology, without relinquishing appeals to empirical control:

Ontological speculation is a legitimate philosophical undertaking, founded in precisely describable experiences, which it interprets with the means of "understandable" categories of process. The formalized Something as an alternative to Nothing is a correctly formed ontological concept. It is antinomic in Kant's sense, but the idealization of reason that leads to the antinomies is not "nonsense," its problems are not "false problems [*Scheinproblem*]." Schelling's "Something" is a symbol as much as is a logical or cosmological "infinite," a symbol justified inasmuch as it renders transparent the meditatively experienced real ground of being in finite language. The idealizations lead to "insoluble" problems only within the framework of world-immanent experience [*i.e.*, in reflective consciousness]; they are, however, "significant" in the framework of ontological experiences. Schelling's question is significant insofar as it refers to the problem of process in the ground of being, the assumption of which seems to me to be an unavoidable requirement of system in a consistent interpretation of the ontological experience complex (*Anam.*, 29-30; *Anam.* ^{GER}, 53-4).

The problem remains that Voegelin is speaking of consciousness and its ground in terms of a "process." He notes that "[a] follower of the theory of a 'stream of consciousness,' and its constitution through the I, can object that the problem of the 'flowing' has simply been shifted to the 'process' and that introducing this word has not contributed anything to the comprehension of consciousness and its processive character." To address this problem, Voegelin returns to consider how time-consciousness is constituted, now in light of the insights gained by Schelling's identity-philosophy and *Potenzenlehre*. Once again, the central problem concerns the concept of the "present." The objection can be raised that the present is "no fixed point from which the directions of a process [*i.e.*, past and future] would become visible." Voegelin thinks that this objection has some merit. It forces a "radical philosophy of the moment" to do without the concept of the present and "to adopt a solipsism of the moment, the moment in which images become visible of which we cannot say with certainty that some of them precede others in a succession" (*Anam.*, 30).

There is only one way out of the solipsism of the moment, Voegelin argues: "Consciousness is not a monad that exists in the form of the momentary image but rather human consciousness, *i.e.*, consciousness based on the body and on the external world." By hypothesizing the substantial

identity of consciousness-body-world-ground, it becomes possible to find the present in a meaningful way, *viz.*, by recollecting the past presents which have, in part, determined themselves as recognizable dates in personal and generally human dimensions of history: "The illuminated, but really flat momentary image acquires the depth of a process, and thereby becomes presence, as the elements of the image, the memories, and projects are incorporated into the experiential nexus of the body's history and the external history." By inferring substantial identity, one's personal history becomes meaningful as the field in which insights have erupted into consciousness and thereby provided memory with discernable dates and a progressive order leading up to the paradoxical experience of one's own present: "The phenomenon of dates for consciousness and the dating of consciousness are closely connected. In this dependence of the order of the natural process, of its relatedness to consciousness, I see the root for the epistemological theory of the ideality and categoriality of time in the experience of nature" (*Ibid.*, 31-2).

Genuine insights, the kind that allow one to date consciousness, are not productions of a self-transparent ego. The climax of an insight breaks forth as the involuntary experience of "illumination" in a dimension of consciousness that is embedded in the substance of reality itself. One's personal history is not merely an "arbitrary" construction. Thus, Voegelin is led to understand the order of his own consciousness by examining the "anamnetic experiences" that continue to present themselves to his memory (*Ibid.*, 36-51). In his work "On the Theory of Consciousness," Voegelin implies that the non-arbitrary character of one's personal history can be extended to the constitution of order in human history *per se*. But this extension becomes the methodical basis for his life-long project in *Order and History*. He looks for the origin of "new" symbolic accounts of reality's order in order to understand the possible order and disorder of consciousness in his contemporary circumstances (*Cf.*, *ibid.*, 32-3).

But what of the problem of the "flow" or "process" in consciousness? Specifically, how can

Voegelin say that not all of consciousness is “flowing” when it is embedded in the “processive” or historical nature of reality itself? Voegelin does not address this problem clearly in this text. However, the outlines for its solution have already become apparent. Consciousness flows, in part, when it focuses its attention on what is moving, *i.e.*, physical objects. The “illuminated” dimension of consciousness, however, does not flow during these experiences but constitutes the stable measure, the non-temporal difference, by which a “flow” can be distinguished in the first place from what does not flow. During the conscious experience of a flow, the illumined dimension of consciousness is firmly embedded, albeit unconsciously, in the ground of being. Voegelin presupposes that it is not typical for the ground of being to change. In this sense, his thought is consistent with the static, onto-theological account of being that forms the basis of Western metaphysics. However, Voegelin’s philosophy is not simply that of a traditional metaphysician. Schelling’s process theology enables Voegelin to understand how the relatively stable ground of being can be thought to change, albeit infrequently, in the course of world history. Voegelin says that historical differences in the experience and symbolization of divinity—evident, for example, in Greek philosophy and Judaeo-Christian revelation—can be explained only as effects caused by changes in God’s self-revelation to the human soul. When such changes occur, “new” experiences and symbols erupt into human consciousness, and different historical epochs are constituted in much the same way that extraordinary experiences create memorable dates in one’s own life (*Cf. ibid.*, 34). Stated theologically, God is not always eternal, but has the freedom to enter, change, and withdraw from time. All of this, as noted in Voegelin’s analysis of the *Potenzenlehre*, is perfectly in accordance with Schelling’s positive philosophy of history and revelation. History is only “human” in a secondary way. It is primarily the history of how eternal being acts in time.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ For Schelling’s discussion of a notion of eternity that includes movement, see *Philosophie der Mythologie*, *Werke* II,1: 304f.; for Voegelin’s discussion see “Eternal Being in Time” (*Anam.*, 116-140).

Intervening Works

By the early 1950s, Voegelin's anthropology emphasizes the central claim that human being "participates" in all of the realms of being, from the divine ground to the relative non-being of nature. This claim governs all cognitive statements with respect to the symbolic "position" of humanity in the order of reality. The participatory nature of existence allows one to acknowledge and name the other participants in being: God, myself, nature, and other humans. It also sets a limit to all possible knowledge of oneself and others. From this primary experience of all the realms of being, "from this primary cognitive participation, turgid with passion, rises the arduous way, the *methodos*, toward the dispassionate gaze on the order of being in the theoretical attitude" (*NSP*, 5). This "theoretical attitude" is the climax of "illumination" mentioned in the earlier text.

Participatory knowledge is never complete or absolute knowledge. This is true, Voegelin claims, even with respect to the knowledge that human participants may attain of themselves: "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:2*). But Voegelin argues that it is also impossible to turn ignorance into an absolute:

The ultimate, essential ignorance is not complete ignorance. Man can achieve considerable knowledge about the order of being, and not the least part of that knowledge is the distinction between the knowable and the unknowable. . . . The concern of man about the meaning of his existence in the field of being does not remain pent up in the tortures of anxiety, but can vent itself in the creation of symbols purporting to render intelligible the relations and tensions between the distinguishable terms of the field (*Ibid.*, 2, 3).

Symbolic "differentiations" of this "compact" primordial field are, of course, quite different between civilizations. But Voegelin seeks to account for the common order of human lives in the broader context of reality. He emphasizes that "[p]articipation in being. . . is not a partial involvement of

man; he is engaged with the whole of his existence, for participation is existence itself. There is no vantage point outside existence from which its meaning can be viewed and a course of action charted according to a plan, nor is there a blessed island to which man can withdraw in order to recapture his self. The role of existence must be played in uncertainty of its meaning, as an adventure of decision on the edge of freedom and necessity" (*Ibid.*, 1).⁵⁶ Note that these passages are all concerned primarily with "existence." They are not statements pertaining to the substantial ground of being. Thus, Schelling would agree with all of these claims. Voegelin has articulated the central presuppositions of Schelling's positive philosophy of existence. The philosophical arguments in *Order and History* are not based upon modern conceptions of the "self." They focus on the participatory nature of historical existence. For Voegelin, following Schelling, the discernable order of history has replaced the arbitrary construction of the "self" as that which can ground the knowledge of reality in contemporary philosophy.

But what of essence? Does Voegelin's emphasis on the "participatory" nature of existence preclude his acceptance of Schelling's account of the substantial identity of the partners in being? No, it does not. Where Schelling speaks of identity, Voegelin speaks of the "consubstantiality" of all the partners. If this were all he said, then one might be left with the impression that the partners may be substantially different and only "related" by reflective thought. But Voegelin continues: "The community of being is experienced with such intimacy that the consubstantiality of the partners will override the separateness of substances. We move in a charmed community where everything that meets us has force and will and feelings, where animals and plants can be men and gods, where men can be divine and gods are kings, . . . where the underground sameness of being is a conductor for magic currents of good or evil force that will subterraneously reach the superficially unreachable

⁵⁶ Voegelin's appeal to the "decision" between necessity and freedom resembles Schelling's account of this decision in the order of being itself (*Cf.*, *Die Weltalter, Werke* 1,8: 220ff., 241, 245, 261-2).

partner, where things are the same and not the same, and can change into each other" (*Ibid.*, 3). Despite his participatory language with respect to existential matters, Voegelin still presupposes the substantial "sameness" of the partners in being—the central feature of Schelling's identity-philosophy. Furthermore, as with Schelling's appeals to the unconscious as the site of this identity, so, too, Voegelin locates this sameness "underground." Voegelin does not retract these Schellingian presuppositions in all of his later work. They do, however, recede further and further underground.⁵⁷

There are, to be sure, a number of changes in Voegelin's understanding of consciousness, reality, and history, which develop between the writing of "On the Theory of Consciousness" (1943) and *In Search of Order*, the last volume of *Order and History* (1985). But these changes concern Voegelin's understanding of consciousness in history. They do not effect the Schellingian theory of consciousness with which he begins to philosophize in the 1943 text. The most notable change occurs in the German publication of *Anamnesis* (1966), where Voegelin begins to suggest that the experiences and symbolizations of divine transcendence in the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle are equivalent to those normally associated with the subjects of Judaeo-Christian revelation. The details of this change and its implication for Voegelin's account of order in history will be discussed at length in the next chapter. For now, an important change in Voegelin's anthropological terminology needs to be discussed.

Recall that Schelling occasionally summarized the perplexities of human life by saying that the soul exists in the "middle" between divine transcendence (eternal freedom) and divine

⁵⁷ The theme of "consubstantiality" resurfaces in several of Voegelin's later writings (*Cf.*, "Theology Confronting World Religions" [1967], in *Conversations*, 46f.; *OH* III: 184; *OH* IV: 72, 76 [1974]; "Reason: the Classic Experience" [1974], in *Anam.*, 95 and *CW* 12: 271). In the *Conversations* reference, Voegelin says he takes the term from work conducted on cosmological civilizations by the Oriental-school at the University of Chicago. He is never as explicit with regard to the substantial identity of the "participants" in being, nor with regard to the specifically Schellingian theory of consciousness he formerly associated with this identity=consubstantiality.

immanence (the necessary order of the natural world). It is due to this particular constitution of the soul that it can experience and symbolize all of the realms of being. In 1964, Voegelin also begins to write of the soul's middle position, in "Eternal Being in Time" (*Anam.*, 128ff.; *Anam.* ^{GER}, 266ff.). He does so, however, not with reference to Schelling but to Plato. He says that Plato understood human existence as that which occurs between (*metaxy*) the immortal gods and mortal nature, knowledge and ignorance, perfection and imperfection, *etc.* The central text from which Voegelin takes the term *metaxy* is Plato's *Symposium*. He refers to this text 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 of the matter, it is 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* [mortal]), could experience eternal being" (*Anam.*, 128). There must be a mediator that is not produced by reflective philosophy; for symbolic appeals to divine reality historically precede the advent of philosophy. Voegelin notes 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 realms, "[i]nterpreting and transporting human things to the gods and divine things to humans; 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 says 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 may be potentially true of human existence generally, Voegelin adds that 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).

The erotic nature of this experience can be liberating; for “[w]hoever has [philosophical] experience grows above the status of a mortal and becomes a ‘spiritual man,’ *daimonios aner*” (*Ibid.*, 128). But it can also be overlooked by “the complacent ignoramus.” Voegelin explains: “the depressing fact of ignorance is that it is satisfied with what it is. The man who does not feel his condition of need does not desire what he is lacking. The philosopher, too, is *amathes* [ignorant], but his *amathia* [ignorance] is the one pole of the tension in which he experiences the other pole, *sophia* (wisdom). That *amathia* that is not a pole of philosophical experience characterizes the man without tension, who is spiritually dull” (*Ibid.*, 129). At this point, it seems as though there are fundamentally different constitutions of the human soul that co-exist in society: those who experience the erotic need for understanding, and others who experience no such need. But Voegelin clarifies this matter. The difference is not primarily with respect to the presence or absence of erotic experience, but with respect to how one responds to this experience. Voegelin describes the “ignoramus” as one who “sinks down” into spiritual sterility because he “closes himself” to “the new order” proclaimed by the erotic philosophy of Socrates-Plato (*Ibid.*, 130).⁵⁸ No plurality of human natures is implied in Voegelin’s analysis of the *Symposium*, only a plurality of

⁵⁸ The claim that the spiritually dull have closed themselves is an important point. It implies that all people experience the erotic tension to “philosophical experience” but simply respond to this experience differently. Those who ignore the impulse to understanding become, through this type of ignorance, “ignoramuses.” This is a culpable state of existence. It forms the basis of Plato’s judgment myths. Thus, in the *Gorgias*, Voegelin finds that Socrates was perfectly justified in his criticisms of Callicles and the Athenian resistance to philosophy he represented: “The decision about the right order, which in time is made by the verdict of the Athenians about Socrates, is in eternity accomplished by the judgment of the dead. The poles of the psychic tension in the historical field become visible as those men who are beholden to ‘time’ and the others who live with a view to ‘eternity’; or the ‘living ones’ who through the splendor of time go toward death, and the ‘dead ones’ who through their life in the tension of judgment go to eternity. Through the historical character of the philosophical experience other types of men become visible, in whose life and death contest the field of history is constituted” (*Anam.*, 130).

responses to a nature that is common to all.

Even so, the plurality of human responses to eros is rather pronounced in Voegelin's text. How is one to account for this point? Voegelin does not attempt to describe humans who exist in society abstractly; he discusses the dispensations of psychological order that allegedly emerged on the occasion of the birth of philosophy. Before Socrates-Plato, Voegelin suggests that Hellenic people understood themselves to be mortal (*thnetos*). Only the gods were thought to be immortal. The difference between gods and humans was symbolized in the mythical epics of Homer and Hesiod. Once Platonic philosophy clarifies the erotic nature of experience, suggesting it to be that which pulls human mortality into the immortality of the divine, two "new" dispensations of the soul's order emerge: (1) the daimonic-erotic philosopher, exemplified by Socrates; and (2) the resisting countermovement of the epic tradition. In light of erotic philosophy, the latter response is judged within life to be spiritually sterile, merely a conservative reaction. In close connection with the three types of responses to erotic experience, Voegelin understands three historical dispensations of psychological order to emerge from the Platonic account of eros: (1) "The past world" of human mortality under the Homeric gods; (2) "the new world" of Socratic philosophy; and (3) "the resisting environment," where "the call of the new humanity is not heard at all or even rejected" by the *amathes* (*Ibid.*, 154). Voegelin understands the historical advance of philosophy to be irreversible, thus indicating that new insights stem from a change in being: "once the humanly representative level of differentiating experience has been attained, no way leads back to the more compact levels" of the preceding tradition (*Ibid.*, 129).

Voegelin does not deny that the "erotic tension" toward the divine ground was present in human souls before its thematic "differentiation" in Platonic philosophy. What is new in the Platonic writings, he argues, is the consciousness of the soul's "metaxic" existence. Nothing changes in the rest of being, but human consciousness is, as it were, promoted from the status of "mortal" to

“spiritual.” This elevation begs the question of similar discoveries in the future. But Voegelin argues that no further promotions of this magnitude have occurred. Even with the advent of Christian consciousness, with its “pneumatic” focus on the creative divinity beyond the world, human life remains only spiritual. For Voegelin, a truly human existence is one that, since the time of Plato, remains consciously rooted in the tensional middle-ground of the *metaxy*.

In 1964, Voegelin began a long-standing practice of conceptualizing the term *metaxy*. It appears in nearly every text that he publishes until the end of his life. By 1974, it becomes a technical term in the substantive, the capitalized *Metaxy* (*Cf.*, *OH IV: passim*). This word is not used as a technical term in Plato’s dialogues.⁵⁹ Voegelin conceptualizes the term in an effort to maintain that human knowledge always remains incomplete, tensional, or in-between perfect knowledge and its lack. This insistence is directed primarily against the attempts by German idealists in the nineteenth-century—most notably Fichte and Hegel—to build comprehensive systems of logic that sought to eradicate the tensional nature of consciousness once and for all. Voegelin’s

⁵⁹ The space restrictions of this chapter do not permit a thorough comparison of the dialogues and Voegelin’s use of the term *metaxy*. This much can be noted briefly. The term *metaxy* occurs ninety-nine times in the dialogues, usually as an adverb which often functions as a preposition taking the genitive case. The term is used only once as a substantive noun, in Book IX of the *Republic*. In this context, Socrates says that vulgar hedonists will be swept downward in their pursuits of bodily pleasures, back to the middle (τὸ μεταξύ) in which they continue to roam about in helpless confusion, never experiencing the cathartic pleasure (καθαρᾶς ἡδονῆς) that comes from setting one’s sights on the reality above (τὸ ἀληθῶς ἄνω) this middle ground (*Republic*, 586a). Indeed, Socrates frequently refers to the middle-ground as a place of confusion that any reasonable person ought to flee (*Cf.*, *Theaetetus*, 180e-181a). Voegelin’s conceptualization of the *metaxy* is a questionable use of the Platonic term for another reason. Voegelin later admits that Plato did not refer to this state of existence with the abstract noun “tension” (*tasis*). It was the Stoics who first introduced the notion of “tension” to philosophy (*Cf.*, *Conversations*, 44). Thus, it might be argued that Voegelin’s “*metaxy*” bears a greater resemblance to Schelling’s tensional account of humanity’s “middle” position in existence than it does to Plato’s usage of the term. Schelling’s writings are replete with the notion that human consciousness is a mixture of existential “tensions,” and he occasionally summarizes this state of existence as occurring in the “middle” between divine immanence (the natural world) and divine transcendence (eternal freedom). For a comprehensive list of Plato’s uses of the term *metaxy* see William P. Simmons, “The Platonic Μεταξύ in the Writings of Eric Voegelin and Simone Weil,” paper presented to the Eric Voegelin Society of the American Political Science Association (Chicago, Ill., September 2, 1995), 32-34. Simmons’ paper concludes with an appendix on “Plato’s Theory of the Μεταξύ” (26-34), but Simmons does not decide, in this conference draft, if Plato had a “theory” of the *metaxy*, or if this word was just an ordinary adverb or preposition to him.

critique of such idealism is a constant theme in his work on the philosophy of consciousness. But the apex of this critique is formulated in the last volume of *Order and History*.

In Search of Order

As indicated by its title, the focus in Voegelin's last book is on the "order" of consciousness, rather than its development in world history. At this point in his life, Voegelin's writing has become more meditative than ever before. He no longer attempts to provide a "theory" of consciousness, as he did back in 1943, due to his further awareness that it is far too easy to misinterpret experiential symbols in the construction of an abstract theory. He suggests that modern philosophers in particular tend to display a penchant for turning many words into concepts, thus mistreating symbols as though they referred to "things" in the world. To correct this problem, Voegelin stresses the paradoxical nature of consciousness and provides a "symbolic" or "meditative" account of the order of consciousness. His attempt to avoid strictly conceptual language in this endeavor builds on an insight that had already been gained by the time he published the original edition of *Anamnesis*. In 1966, Voegelin reflected on his 1943 studies:

The most important result of these efforts was the insight that a "theory" of consciousness in the sense of generically valid propositions concerning a pre-given structure was impossible. For consciousness is not a given to be deduced from outside but an experience of participation in the ground of being whose logos [*i.e.*, order] has to be brought to clarity through the meditative exegesis of itself. The illusion of a "theory" had to give way to the reality of the meditative process; and this process had to go through its phases of increasing experience and insight (*Anam. GER*, 7).⁶⁰

In the 1943 text recalled by Voegelin, his analysis of consciousness focused on an experience of sense perception, specifically that of the "flow" of a tone. In his last work, Voegelin continues the attempt to clarify the order of consciousness by focusing on actual experiences. This time, however,

⁶⁰ Voegelin himself has translated these sentences from his Foreword to the German *Anamnesis*. See "Consciousness and Order: Foreword to 'Anamnesis' (1966)," in *The Beginning and the Beyond: Papers from the Gadamer and Voegelin Conferences*, Supplementary Issue of *Loneragan Workshop*, Vol. 4, Fred Lawrence, ed. (Boston: Boston College, 1984), 35-41. I have quoted Voegelin's translation (*Ibid.*, 35-6).

the chosen experiences are not directly related to sense perception. He focuses on the experiences that arise in acts of communication, specifically between a writer (Voegelin himself) and his readers. His meditation takes the specific form of a search for "the Beginning." At the end of *Order and History* and the end of his life, Voegelin thus returns to search for the Beginning of history, of intelligible thought, and of order *per se*.

In Search of Order opens with the chapter entitled "The Beginning of the Beginning." Voegelin begins by searching for the "beginning" of his chapter. He writes, in the first sentence of the book: "As I am putting down these words on an empty page I have begun to write a sentence that, when it is finished, will be the beginning of a chapter on certain problems of Beginning." He wonders if this sentence is truly the beginning of his chapter. He says that he does not know, "for the chapter is yet unwritten; and, though I have a general idea of its construction, I know from experience that new ideas have a habit of emerging while the writing is going on, compelling changes in the construction and making the beginning unsuitable." This situation begins to reveal the paradoxical character of human consciousness, which, like the chapter Voegelin sets out to write, appears to have "no beginning before it has come to its end."

This insight reveals the beginning of a paradox. But Voegelin also realizes that the end of the chapter will not reveal the true beginning he seeks, thus increasing the paradox. The completed chapter will point beyond itself to the book of which it will be only a part. In addition, the book will point beyond itself "to the intricate problems of communication between reader and writer. The book is meant to be read; it is an event in a vast social field of thought and language, of writing and reading about matters which the members of the field believe to be of concern for their existence in truth" (*OHV*: 13). The book will point beyond itself to the actual experiences of a "communion of existential concern." And this community depends, furthermore, on the intelligibility of concerns that can be expressed in a mutually comprehensible language: "Back we are referred, the reader and

I, to the words, for they have begun before I have begun to put them down. Was the word in the beginning after all?"

This focus on words causes Voegelin to realize that he is not writing simply in what is called "English;" he is using a "philosophers' language," which has neither begun nor will end in his present work. He realizes that his language "has been structured by a millennial history of the philosophers' quest for truth, a history that has not stopped at some point in the past but is continuing in the present effort between reader and writer. The social field constituted by the philosophers' language, thus, is not limited to communication through the spoken and written word among contemporaries, but extends historically from a distant past, through the present, into the future" (*Ibid.*, 14). Given this widening of the context in which meaningful experiences occur, when or where have the experiences Voegelin seeks to interpret begun?

Voegelin notices "something peculiar" about the philosophers' language itself: "In order to be intelligible, it had to be spoken in one of the several ethnic, imperial, and national languages that have developed ever since antiquity, though it does not seem to be identical with any one of them; and yet. . . they all have left, and are leaving, their specific traces of meaning in the language used, and expected to be understood, in the present chapter; but then again, in its millennial course the quest for truth has developed, and is still developing, a language of its own." The philosophers' language leaves the philosopher, Voegelin, somewhat at a distance from the words he uses in his chapter on the Beginning. The words he uses have been used by others before. He is conscious of this fact. But he also knows that the specific configuration in which he puts them down will stand apart as a symbolic work in its own right. Voegelin knows his articulated thoughts to be both embedded in the history of communication, which he consciously continues, and yet somewhat removed from the historical conventions of language serving him as the means of communication. He is faced with the problem of two languages and his awareness of their difference. There is a

conventional language called “English” and a “philosophers’ language,” which he gives no other name. The consciousness of this difference leads Voegelin to ask: “What is the structure in reality that will induce, when experienced, this equivocal use of the term ‘language’?” The equivocation is induced, he decides, by “the paradoxical structure of consciousness and its relation to reality” (*Ibid.*, 15). The three meanings of the term “language” correspond to three structures in the order of consciousness.

The first structure is now explicitly named “intentionality.” Voegelin writes: “On the one hand, we speak of consciousness as a something located in human beings in their bodily existence. In relation to this concretely embodied consciousness, reality assumes the position of an object intended.” The corresponding reality thus acquires “a metaphorical touch of external thingness.”⁶¹ Voegelin notices this “metaphor” of external thingness in common speech, for example, when one says that one is conscious of *something*, remembering or imagining *something*, and so on. He notices that the reality intended as the object of a subject’s consciousness is habitually called a “thing” in English. Thus, Voegelin calls the reality corresponding to the intentionality of consciousness its “thingness” or “thing-reality.” Intentionality is the mode of consciousness in which analytical concepts are formed about differentiated things in the world. But intentional states of consciousness do not exhaust the complete range of human experience.

Voegelin notices that thinking strictly within the subject-object distinction of intentional consciousness has its limitations. For example, it is always possible that, during the course of one’s

⁶¹ Notice the description of intentional reality as “metaphorically” external. This point is clarified in a contemporaneous text in which Voegelin prepares the account of consciousness that ultimately appears as *In Search of Order*. Voegelin describes intentional reality as only “metaphorically” external in order to leave open the question as to whether or not there are external objects of noemata in a phenomenological sense. See Voegelin, “The Meditative Origin of the Philosophical Knowledge of Order” (1981), in *The Beginning and the Beyond: Papers from the Gadamer and Voegelin Conferences*, *op. cit.*, 49. The “metaphorical” description of external reality also implies the substantive identity of subjects and objects of cognition.

thinking about such matters, the subject of cognition may recall that he or she is also part of the same reality which has been objectified by the intentionality of consciousness. When this realization occurs, reality no longer appears to be the relatively controlled, named, posited, or constructed object of consciousness "but the something in which consciousness occurs as an event of participation between partners in the community of being." This realization has considerable consequences for how one is able to understand the "subject" of experiences: "reality moves from the position of an intended object to that of a subject, while the consciousness of the human subject intending objects moves to the position of a predicative event in the subject 'reality' as it becomes luminous for its truth." This type of experience constitutes the existential paradox of consciousness alluded to previously. It precludes the human subject from becoming a transcendental ego, effectively creating its "own" reality, but this paradox causes no disorder in its wake. It opens the way for minds lost in the confusions of logical paradoxes to regain an appropriate sense of how the mind is always already a substantial part of anything it experiences. This insight is possible by virtue of what Voegelin calls the "luminosity" of consciousness, the second structure named in his study (*Ibid.*, 15). In contrast to the conceptual and narrative character of intentionality, luminosity is the symbolic and meditative aspect of consciousness. It allows one to relate the separated "parts" of reality to their proper place within the whole. As distinct from intentionality, luminosity has the passive character of "illumination," as mentioned in Voegelin's 1943 study of consciousness. That is to say, "luminosity" is constituted by an unintentional experience in which the comprehending whole of reality comes to mind. Put differently, one cannot bring about a genuine experience of luminosity intentionally. It either occurs or fails to occur at the climax of one's meditative pursuits.

Voegelin wonders "where" the luminous experience of reality occurs. Since the subject-object distinction is inverted in this mode of consciousness, he says that the experience

has to be located, not in one of the partners, but in the comprehending reality; consciousness has a structural dimension by which it belongs, not to man in his bodily existence, but to the reality in which man, the other partners to the community of being, and the participatory relations among them occur. If the spatial metaphor still be permitted, the luminosity of consciousness is located somewhere "between" human consciousness in bodily existence and reality intended in its mode of thingness (*Ibid.*, 16).

Voegelin uses the Greek word *metaxy* (meaning "between") to denote the metaphorical site of luminous experiences. They occur, therefore, between the bodily located consciousness and the consciousness that knows the body to be "located" in space and time. This point suggests that luminous experiences have always preceded reflective differentiations of the "body" and "consciousness," even though one may have lost sight of this basic point due to the predominance of intentional concepts in Western phenomenalist cultures. Voegelin's appeal to "luminosity" in a philosophical study of order is consistent with his account of contemplation as the highest aspect of reason to which instrumental rationality is subordinate. Furthermore, his description of "luminosity" resembles Schelling's account of how reason, properly understood, is the self-affirmation of the All in human consciousness. It helps to explain why Voegelin says that the reality of experience is "self-interpretive." The genuine interpretation of a particular experience, it seems, is always initially guided by the luminous order of consciousness. Such interpretation neither begins nor ends in an existential vacuum, nor with a consciously constructed "human" or "social" reality. The luminous interpretation of reality's order is based on a mystical type of empiricism which keeps Voegelin from perpetuating the *proton pseudos*. His appeals to the luminosity of consciousness imply that the human mind is substantially identical to the reality it attempts to describe with the formulation of intentionalist concepts.

Voegelin searches for a word to name the comprehending reality in which luminous experiences occur. This reality is said to comprehend all of "the partners in being, *i.e.*, God and the world, man and society." He says that there is no technical term for it in common usage. But he

notices that when philosophers “run into this structure incidentally in their exploration of other subject matters,” they have “a habit of referring to it by a neutral ‘it.’ The It referred to is the mysterious ‘it’ that also occurs in everyday language in such phrases as ‘it rains.’”⁶² Voegelin thus refers to the comprehensive reality that comes to light in luminous experience as the “It-reality” (*Ibid.*). He may not have been aware of a common term for this comprehending reality in his philosophical climate, but he does think of the “It-reality” as an equivalent symbol for Plato’s *to pan* (the All)(*Cf. ibid., 87ff.*). This usage is also consistent with Schelling’s “All.”

The two structures of consciousness may be summarized by listing the terms that Voegelin uses to distinguish them:

<u>Intentionality</u>	<u>Luminosity</u>
narrative	event, experience
concepts	symbols
intentional	expressive
thing-reality	It-reality

Voegelin knows that by separating the structures in this way one runs the risk of creating the mistaken impression that they are essentially distinct; so he argues explicitly against this potential problem. All structures of consciousness are always present. None can be studied to the exclusion of the other without creating an untenable anthropology: “There is. . . no luminosity as object of a special study about the ‘It’; neither is there psychology or phenomenology as a special study about the intentionality of the subject. Human consciousness always manifests both structures.”⁶³ In other words, there can be no strictly “luminous” theology without the corresponding witness to truth in the calculative reason (intentionality) that predominates in the natural sciences; nor can the natural sciences and the modern systems of philosophy in their wake do without the luminous dimension of consciousness. “Even when, in the climate of secularist epistemology, we

⁶² One of the philosophers to whom Voegelin alludes here is Nietzsche, another is Karl Kraus (*Cf. The Beginning and the Beyond, op. cit., 49, 108*).

⁶³ Voegelin, *The Beginning and the Beyond, op. cit., 49*.

believe ourselves to be safe from transcendence and to have immanent objects at hand, the humble object still is never god-forsaken but radiates transcendence in its immanent *actus essendi*.”⁶⁴ Special studies invalidate themselves when they engage in “magic dreams of a truth that can be reached by concentrating exclusively on either the intentionality of conceptualizing science or the luminosity of mythic and revelatory symbols” (*Ibid.*, 18). In Schellingian terms, all philosophy worthy of the name thinks both with the “negative” concepts of *a priori* rationality and the “positive” symbols of *a posteriori* revelation. No reduction of consciousness to one or the other structure is permissible in a philosophical study of order.

At this point, however, a further problem arises. How is it possible to know that these structures of consciousness are distinct? Are they differentiated by the intentionality of consciousness? The answer to this question must be no, according to Voegelin, since structures in consciousness are not objects with an external touch of thingness. Accordingly, he argues that a third structure must account for why such questions can arise at all. He calls this structure “reflective distance.” Consciousness is structured, Voegelin writes, “not only by the paradox of intentionality and luminosity, but also by an awareness of the paradox, by a dimension to be characterized as a reflectively distancing remembrance” (*Ibid.*, 41). The specific type of remembrance that Voegelin has in mind has become archaic. Given its intentional character, the type of memory that appears in reflective distance will serve to “remind somebody of who he is or what he is.”⁶⁵ This is the notion of memory that was symbolized “compactly” or incompletely by Plato’s *anamnesis* and Hesiod’s *mnemosyne* (*Cf., ibid.*, 41, 70ff.).

In his *Theogony*, Voegelin notes that Hesiod understands the Heliconian Muses, the daughters of Mnemosyne (Remembrance) and Zeus, to play two roles. First, they occasionally

⁶⁴ Voegelin, “What is History?” (1963), *CW* 28: 6.

⁶⁵ Voegelin, *The Beginning and the Beyond*, *op. cit.*, 106-07.

remind Zeus and the other Olympians “of their existence as the presence of divine order, victorious over the disorder of the older gods from whom they stem and who still are alive.” Second, the Muses also “mediate divinity” to human beings “by inspiring the ordering word of princes and singers” (*Ibid.*, 71). In the Platonic dialogues, erotic philosophy becomes the musical activity *par excellence*, specifically in this second function described by Hesiod.⁶⁶ Socrates becomes the paradigmatic musician who goes about speaking the ordering word that attempts to remind human beings of what they truly are.

Voegelin attempts to continue this musical activity. Like Schelling, he attempts to remind idealists who would divinize themselves in the construction of reflective-identity systems of philosophy that this procedure is inherently flawed. Reflection is always distancing, thus pertaining to an aspect of consciousness that is always other than the divine. Voegelin says explicitly that his notion of “reflective distance” has a critical function in his own times. He writes: “The symbolism of reflective ‘distance’. . . has been formulated in opposition to, and as a corrective of, the symbolism of reflective ‘identity’ developed by the German idealistic philosophers in their great attempt at differentiating the anamnestic structure of consciousness more adequately in its personal, social, and historical aspects” (*Ibid.*, 48). Voegelin criticizes only the identity systems of Fichte and Hegel (*Cf., ibid.*, 49ff.). The central problem in these systems is the attempt to reduce consciousness to its intentionality. Voegelin argues at length that this reduction is simply impossible to sustain in an empirical philosophy of consciousness (*Cf., ibid.*, 54-70). He says that both men are well aware of the luminosity of consciousness (*Cf., ibid.*, 39, 41, 61-2, 69) but for some reason choose to indulge in acts of “imaginative oblivion” with respect to this aspect of their experience, thereby engaging in the other potential of Platonic *anamnesis* (*Ibid.*, 41ff.).

⁶⁶ *Cf., Phaedo*, 60d-61a.

Voegelin attempts to balance his criticism of deformative accounts of consciousness. He does so by calling attention to two cases in which all of the structures of consciousness emerge without suffering the methodological restrictions of idealist philosophy. These cases are the Platonic dialogues and the myth of the Beginning in *Genesis* 1. Voegelin observes: "When Plato writes a dialogue, then it is partially a matter of forming concepts analytically, partially of forming a myth with symbols; and the whole offers us neither entirely an analysis nor a symbolic myth entirely." Plato writes in the mode of reflective distance, where "the entire problem of luminosity and intentionality is now transposed into a language of reflection, in which this problem is spoken about as if there were a reality independent of reflection." Yet, unlike Hegel, Plato keeps his "reflective I in the distance," separating it from "the participatory self" of concrete experience.⁶⁷ Plato appears to understand better than Hegel that the reflective activity of writing is always other than the life it attempts to interpret; he is the better realist.

The same is true, Voegelin contends, of the unknown author of *Genesis*: "The story that opens with Genesis 1 must not be construed hypostatically as a narrative told either by a revelatory God or by an intelligently imaginative human being. It is both, because it is neither the one nor the other; and it has this paradoxical character inasmuch as it is not a plain narration of things, but at the same time a symbolism in which the human beginning of order becomes translucent for its meaning as an act of participation in the divine Beginning" (*Ibid.*, 26). Even though Voegelin does not think that the story in *Genesis* can be understood as the declaration of a "revelatory God," he does say that all such myths and their philosophical clarifications in history amount to a grand story which is told by the It-reality. When reflecting on mediated experiences, symbols are created, myths are told, dialogues are written in which, Voegelin says, the It-reality tells its own story (*Cf.*, *ibid.*, 30, 35).

⁷² Voegelin, *The Beginning and the Beyond*, *op. cit.*, 50.

In other words, luminous symbols are self-interpretive. This point can be known only in the “distance” of reflective analysis.

A final point needs to be addressed with regard to the possibility that a Schellingian orientation continues to guide Voegelin’s latest thought. What has become of his earlier willingness to speak explicitly in terms of the substantial identity of all the “partners” in being? Clearly, Voegelin is much more reticent at this point to speak of identity. Much of his last book is concerned with criticizing the identity-philosophy of German idealists. However, as indicated previously, there are good reasons to suppose that Voegelin’s Schellingian orientation has not changed significantly.

Within his critique of idealism, Voegelin passes over Schelling’s philosophy of absolute identity in silence. Why is this? Voegelin equates *Identitätsphilosophie* with *Ichphilosophie* (Cf., *ibid.*, 51), and the identity-philosophy he criticizes is specifically the *Ichphilosophie* of Fichte and Hegel. This point speaks against including Schelling within the scope of Voegelin’s critique. It is clear from his comments in “Last Orientation” and *Anamnesis* that Voegelin understood clearly how Schelling’s identity-philosophy was not based on the reflective consciousness of an “I,” transcendental or otherwise. The human “I” appeared to be a derivative construction produced by acts of reflective consciousness.⁶⁸ This much has been established. However, the possibility that Voegelin may continue to presuppose the validity of Schelling’s pre-reflective notion of identity is obscured in his last book—and this for two reasons. First, again within his critique of identity-philosophy, Voegelin does not call attention to the fact that not all identity-philosophies are equal; Schelling’s was not based on the questionable presuppositions of an *Ichphilosophie*. Second,

⁶⁸ Voegelin does not discuss the question of “self-consciousness” in *In Search of Order*. This matter is clarified, however, in the preparatory text for this volume. Voegelin clearly thought of self-consciousness as a derivative construct brought about by the reflective distancing mode of consciousness (Cf., *The Beginning and the Beyond*, *op. cit.*, 50, where the self-conscious “I” is distinguished from the more immediate “participatory self”).

Voegelin mentions Schelling's name in a list of young Germans who were all so impressed by the political revolutions in Europe and America, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, that they began to look for a distinctively German revolution in consciousness (*Cf., ibid., 50-1*). This reference may imply that Schelling remained a youthful enthusiast for a German revolution in consciousness that would out-shine the political revolutions of other nations.

But this implication is false. Schelling matured, and Voegelin knew it. In his *Spätphilosophie*, Schelling develops a process theology (*Potenzenlehre*) that prevents him from indulging in the hope for a transformation of consciousness that could neglect the fundamental cause of any such change by an act of the divine.⁶⁹ In other words, when Schelling does express eschatological hopes he does so in a way resembling Voegelin's claim that the history of reality has an "eschatological structure"—a point to be discussed at length in Chapter 5. Therefore, Voegelin's critique of reflective-identity systems does not touch the identity-philosophy of Schelling. As discussed previously, Schelling also emphasized the distancing aspect of reflective consciousness and used this point in his own critique of idealism.

CONCLUSION

Voegelin's ability to transcend phenomenological accounts of the order of consciousness came from two sources: (1) his reading of Schelling's identity-philosophy; and (2) his own meditations on structures in consciousness. In his meditations, Voegelin was able to corroborate the distinctive conclusions gained in Schelling's identity-philosophy: the primacy of contemplative reason, the substantial identity of the unconscious mind or depth of the soul with all the realms of being, the secondary role of reflective consciousness in philosophy, and the derivative nature or "middle

⁶⁹ *Cf., Schelling, Die Weltalter, Werke I,8: 344; Philosophie der Offenbarung, Werke II,4: 332-34.*

position" of the ego. Nothing in Voegelin's thought perpetuates the *proton pseudos*: His work cannot be understood properly by ascribing to its author the presupposition that thought and being are substantially different. Voegelin's description of the world as a "charmed community" in which all the "partners in being" are substantially identical ("consubstantial") suggests that the Schellingian identity-philosophy he supported in his 1943 letter to Schütz may continue to guide his anthropological thinking in later works. I have provided textual evidence in support of this claim. But it is further supported by the facts that Voegelin never retracted his published support of Schelling's "ontology," in the German *Anamnesis*, and his latest critique of ego-based *Identitätsphilosophie* cannot be said to have the mature Schelling in mind as one of its targets. What is more, other identity-philosophies are clearly discounted by a contention that Voegelin shares with Schelling: the order of consciousness is constituted by its "luminous" dimension. Voegelin's philosophy of consciousness remains consistently indebted to Schelling's identity-philosophy. This conclusion, it seems to me, is best able to account for his continued use of terms suggesting the pre-reflective, luminous, substantial identity of the "It-reality" and human consciousness in his latest work. As with Schelling, Voegelin's identity-philosophy of order is the basis for his "mystical empiricism."

CHAPTER FOUR

SCHELLING'S HISTORIOGRAPHY

*"Die Geschichte selbst ist nichts anderes
als die Entwicklung dieser Versöhnung des Endlichen,
die in Gott ewig, ohne Zeit ist."
— Schelling*

The remaining chapters in this Part of my study turn to focus on how Schelling and Voegelin search for order in history. This change in focus reflects a similar change in the path of their philosophical developments. Once they learn through studies in the philosophy of consciousness that the human ego is a derivative rather than an absolute ground of knowledge, they turn to historical studies in order to understand how the experienced structures in consciousness have come to be what they are. Schelling and Voegelin develop progressive accounts of how the order of consciousness has unfolded (Schelling) or differentiated (Voegelin) in history. Yet both are critical of the historical relativism they find in modern progressivist accounts of history's order. Modern progressivism, they argue, understands epochal changes in the order of consciousness to have been caused by relatively "immanent" or pragmatic factors—such as economic conditions, natural or genetic responses to environmental conditions, or the arbitrary desires of politico-military leaders. In brief, modern progressivists claim that the order of history has been made by a number of factors that, in the future, will fall increasingly within the purview of human control. Consequently, progress is to be understood as the gradual mastery of what was once thought to be beyond the control of positive science. Once the primitive thinking of mythological and theological times has been replaced by a thoroughly scientific understanding of human life, it will be possible for human beings increasingly to fashion the order of history. Schelling and Voegelin argue, on the contrary, that the historical relativism of modern progressivists is superficial or phenomenalistic; to wit, it is unscientific. Careful study of the historical records of human experience and symbolization will

reveal, they argue, that epochal changes in the order of consciousness have not come about from purely immanent causes. Rather, the scientific study of history reveals that a dynamic God is the creator of history's order.

What follows is an account of how Schelling understands the self-revelation of this God, the ground of all science, to emerge in the history of human consciousness. In contrast to phenomenal historicism or progressivism, Schelling argues that historical studies should be able to reconcile in the soul of the historian the perceived division between infinite and finite worlds. "History itself is none other than the development of this *reconciliation* of the finite [*des Endlichen*], which is eternal in God."¹ Schelling introduces his philosophy of history with an account of the need for a "positive" philosophy of existence in order to complement insights gained by the "negative" philosophy of pure reason.

I. "POSITIVE" AND "NEGATIVE" ASPECTS OF PHILOSOPHY

In Schellingian terms, to move from the study of order in consciousness to the study of order in history is a transition from negative to positive philosophy. Put simply, negative philosophy is so named because it negates particular ("subjective") differences in how people experience the world in order to understand the *a priori* structure of the human mind common to all. Positive philosophy is so named because it interprets existential particularities as positive reflections of the essential order that comes to light in negative philosophy, thus assuming the basic validity ("objectivity") of rationalist philosophy. Negative philosophy negates plurality (appearance) in order to understand unity (essence); positive philosophy presupposes the substantial unity of the All in order to understand particular things and events as appearances of this unity. Schelling writes that, in

¹ Schelling, *System der gesamten Philosophie, Werke* I,6: 567.

addition to other predecessors, Kant unwittingly prepared the way for a clear distinction between negative and positive types of philosophy in his critique of metaphysics:

Whilst he believed that he had brought *all* knowledge of the supersensuous to an end for all time by his critique, he really only caused the negative and positive in philosophy to have to separate, but precisely because of this the positive, now emerging in its complete independence [*in seiner ganzen Selbständigkeit*], was able to oppose itself, as positive, to the merely negative philosophy as the second side of philosophy as a whole. Kant began this process of separation and the resultant process of clarification of philosophy in the positive. Kant's critique contributed to this all the more because it was in no way *hostile* towards the positive. Whilst he demolishes the whole edifice of that metaphysics, he always makes his view clear that in the last analysis one must *want* what it wanted, and that its content would in fact finally be the *true* metaphysics, if it were only possible.²

What positive philosophy "wants" is to understand how finite things can be true appearances of the infinite All. Discursive reasoning is of some use in the attainment of this understanding. In agreement with Kant and other rationalists, Schelling can admit that "[t]he whole world lies, so to speak, in the nets of the understanding or of reason." This situation is especially true of the human mind, in which he thinks that an *a priori* structure has been correctly discerned by negative rationalists. But Schelling perceives a fundamental limitation in this type of thinking: "Everything can be in the logical Idea without anything being *explained* thereby. For example, everything in the sensuous world is grasped in number and measure, but this does not mean therefore that geometry or arithmetic explain the sensuous world." This point indicates that a positive type of philosophy is needed in order to account for the meaning of perceived structures in reality. Positive philosophy seeks to understand "*how* exactly [reason] got into those nets, since there is obviously something other and something *more* than mere reason in the world, indeed there is something which strives beyond these barriers."³

² Schelling, *Zur Geschichte der neueren Philosophie, Werke* 1,10: 74-5 (I have modified Bowie's translation [1994, p. 95]).

³ *Ibid.* 143-4 (I have modified Bowie's translation). On the continuing importance of Kant's critical philosophy, see the introductory lectures of Schelling's *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Werke* II,3: 31-93. esp. 82-4. Considered historically, Schelling became one of the first philosophers to call explicitly for a "return to Kant." As with other neo-Kantians, Schelling made his return in order to surpass Kant. For more detailed

Schelling describes the transition from negative to positive philosophy in a number of places in his later work. Perhaps the clearest of these is located in his lectures *On the History of Modern Philosophy*.⁴ In this text, Schelling clarifies the need for positive philosophy against the antithetical background of Hegel's identity-philosophy and Jacobi's mystical theosophy. Schelling acknowledges that both Hegel and Jacobi also perceived the need for a positive philosophy of existence. But he contends that both failed to establish it for similar reasons.

In the first edition of his *Science of Logic* (1812), Hegel began what was offered as a presuppositionless science by positing the immediate concept of "pure being," taking this term to indicate that from which all things have come to be. This hypothesis was supposed to assure him of the objectivity of his beginning; for he sought to develop a reflective science that was to leave absolutely nothing outside of itself, a total explanation of the world of nature and spirit. Schelling says that Hegel attempted to guarantee the "purity" of his concept of being by having it indicate the negation of everything subjective. His pure being was not, therefore, the being of all determinate beings; it was equivalent to the concept of nothing. Hence, an initial difficulty already comes to light. Hegel began his system of logic with a negative abstraction, pure being, without first giving

accounts of the development of neo-Kantian thought, see Henri Dussort, *L'Ecole de Marbourg* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963) and Judy Deane Saltzman, *Paul Natorp's Philosophy of Religion Within the Marburg Neo-Kantian Tradition* (New York: Georg Olms Verlag Hildesheim, 1981). Dussort provides a detailed account of the movement from what he calls the period of post-Kantian idealism (roughly 1800-1840) to the work of Hermann Cohen. Part I of Saltzman's book follows Dussort's work closely; Part II adds to his analysis with three chapters on Paul Natorp's philosophy of religion. These works are of limited value with respect to the historical significance of Schelling. They retain the conventional view by treating him as an Hegelian idealist. But they are quite helpful with respect to understanding Voegelin's early training in the Marburg school (Cf. Voegelin, *AR*, 1-7, 20-3; and "Autobiographical Statement" in *The Beginning and the Beyond*, *op. cit.*, 112).

⁴ The exact date of this text is a matter of some dispute. It is listed as 1827 in the compilation of Schelling's works by his son. However, Horst Fuhrmans and Bowie himself find that it was probably delivered either in 1833-34 or 1836-37 (Cf. the "Translator's Preface" in Bowie's edition, ix). Based on internal evidence pertaining to Schelling's discussion of Hegelian texts published after 1827 and the fact that these themes are strongly represented in the *Philosophie der Offenbarung*—initially delivered from 1831-32 (Cf., *Werke* II,4: 231)—I shall assume the correctness of the Translator's account, which places the lectures in the mid-1830s.

an account of that from which this abstraction was abstracted. Schelling explains: “Concepts as such do in fact exist nowhere but in consciousness, they *are*, therefore, taken objectively, *after* nature, not *before* it; Hegel took them from their natural position by putting them at the beginning of philosophy. There he places the most abstract concepts first. . . .; but abstractions cannot be there, be taken for realities, before that from which they are abstracted; becoming cannot be there before something becomes, existence not before something exists.”⁵

Schelling calls attention to a second problem with the premise of Hegel’s *Logic*. Hegel attributes to his concept of pure being “an inner restlessness which drives it on to further determinations” in the rest of the system. Hegel does so without explaining how motion can be attributed to being. Schelling objects by saying that, strictly speaking, there is no inherent movement in the concept of pure being. Thus, a system that begins with a pure concept will not be able to progress to an account of anything else.⁶ Hegel attempts to progress nonetheless. And Schelling finds the basis for his attempt “only in the fact that thought is already accustomed to a more concrete being, a being more full of content, and thus cannot be satisfied with that meager diet of pure being in which. . . . no determinate content is thought.” In the final analysis, that which prevents Hegel from remaining in the emptiness of his pure being is “not a necessity which lies in the concept itself, but rather a necessity which lies in the philosopher and which is imposed upon him by his memory.” Hegel tacitly remembers, Schelling argues, that “nature happens to exist.” and movement is a part of how one perceives nature.⁷ But these memories are not accounted for in

⁵ Schelling, *Zur Geschichte der neueren Philosophie, Werke* I,10: 131, 140-1 (Bowie translation, 145). Schelling thinks that this problem was caused by Hegel’s mistaken attempt to begin his *Logic* with the absolutely pure being that Schelling himself had reached only at the end of his *Naturphilosophie*. In his nature-philosophy, Schelling abstracted the purity of being gradually from nature and spirit and then posited it, in Kantian fashion, as that which is produced by the relations of mere thought. See Schelling’s chapter on “*Naturphilosophie*” in Bowie’s translation of *ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*, 153, 131, 153.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 131, 153.

Hegel's *Logic*.

Schelling does not criticize Hegel simply for the contradiction of having presuppositions in an allegedly presuppositionless science. If this were the only difficulty, then the presuppositions could simply be removed and the logic would be perfected. The actual problem lies deeper. Hegel has the right presupposition, but he attempts to use it in an incorrect way. He has the right presupposition, that is, for a purely negative philosophy of essence. But this is not the end that Hegel has in sight. At the conclusion of his *Logic*, he thinks that he has accounted for all of the determinate relations in nature and spirit and successfully withdrawn these into his own purified consciousness=absolute knowledge. But Schelling objects: "how should *true* [*wirklicher*] spirit be that which cannot move away from the end where it is posited, be that which only has the function of taking up all the preceding moments into itself as that which brings *everything* to an end, but not itself be the beginning and principle of something?" True spirit, according to Schelling, is not merely a final cause. It must be the principle cause of all determinate beings and their relations. Hegel has not attained the positive philosophy which, in Schelling's estimation, he intended. Rather, he has arrived only at a distorted view of the regulative idea of God in negative philosophy: "For the God insofar as He is only the *end*, as He can be in the purely rational philosophy, the God who has no future, who cannot initiate anything, who can only be as final cause, and in no way a principle such a God is only spirit according to . . . essence, thus in fact only substantial spirit, not spirit in the sense in which piety or normal use of language understands the word." ⁸

Schelling grants that Hegel was aware of these problems, which is why he tried "a further greater intensification, and even sought to get to the idea of a free creation of the world" in the second edition of his *Logic* (1832). Hegel attempts to reverse the original conclusion of his *Logic*.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 155 (Bowie's translation modified slightly).

He attempts to transform his final cause into a first cause, revising only a few sentences of the book, in order to make what was at first result become principle. This reversal would make the beginning of Hegel's *Logic* roughly equivalent to the absolute being at the beginning of Schelling's identity-philosophy. Hegel thinks he can attain real knowledge of natural existence in this way. But Schelling has already encountered the futility of this attempt. He is thus left to conclude: "if this reversal were possible in the way *Hegel* wishes, and if he had not just spoken of this reversal but had tried it and really established it, then he would already himself have put a second philosophy by the side of his first, the converse of the first, which would have been roughly what we want under the name of the positive philosophy."⁹

Jacobi (1743-1819) tried a different route to positive philosophy. In his theosophical period, Jacobi appealed to an immediate inner feeling, an "inner light," by which he claimed to find some grounds for transcending the concept of the impersonal God attained at the conclusion of rational systems of philosophy. Jacobi's "inner light" took the form of a wish: the desire not to allow God to be reduced to the status of a regulative idea. And this wish, Schelling contends, was enough to set him on a potentially fruitful path. Schelling is partially sympathetic to Jacobi's desire: "We cannot declare such an expression to be forbidden, for we ourselves allow a great importance, at least for the initial determination of concepts in philosophy, to *wanting* [*Wollen*]." In other words, "[i]t is all very well to say, like Jacobi: 'I demand a personal God, a highest being to whom a personal relationship is possible, an eternal thou [*ein ewiges Du*] which answers my I, not a being which is merely in my thought. . . . I demand a transcendent being which is also something for me outside of my thought.'"¹⁰ This God is also who Schelling wants to know. However, unlike Jacobi, Schelling understands this wanting only to be the beginning of knowledge. Jacobi took the desire

⁹ *Ibid.*, 157 (Bowie's translation).

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 166, 167.

itself to be the only possible source of knowledge and attempted to make it stand as an immediate science of God. But Schelling objects: "this philosophy, instead of really attacking the knowledge which displeases it, *completely* gives way to it, by withdrawing into not-knowing [*Nichtwissen*], with the assurance that only in not-knowing does salvation lie. From this it follows, then, that it considers that merely substantial knowledge which excludes the *actus*, which dominates in rationalism, itself to be the only possible real [*echt*] and true knowledge, not by opposing another *knowledge* to it, but by opposing mere not-knowing to it."

Jacobi was aware of this problem. He later tried to overcome it, Schelling maintains, when he attempted to argue in support of the complete rationality of his feeling. This attempt was, to Schelling, a disastrous move: "When Jacobi later substituted reason for feeling in order to make his peace with rationalism, his philosophy also lost the truth which it previously had. Feeling expresses a personal relationship. But now an immediate relationship to the *personal* God was to be attributed to impersonal reason, which is completely unthinkable." Jacobi clearly perceived that systems of negative philosophy do not explain anything in the real world, no more than "geometry really explains anything." Yet he did not see his way clear to a truly positive philosophy.¹¹ That is to say, he did not develop a philosophy of history. Consequently, Schelling complains that Jacobi's remarks about "Christ and Christianity in his later writings are completely in agreement with the views of the most rabid theological rationalism." By relying on feeling, even disguised as "reason," and neglecting to consider the historical determinations of his experiences, Jacobi lost even a proper understanding of the negative ground by which he almost turned to positive philosophy. By closing his eyes to history, Jacobi deprived himself of the means by which he could have reached the higher science:

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 167, 175, 176.

Every philosophy which does not keep its basis *in* the negative, and which wishes to reach the positive, the divine in an immediate manner, *without* the negative, finally dies of unavoidable spiritual exhaustion. The true character of the Jacobian philosophy is such a scientific haste. For even that aspect of God and divine things he reaches in *his* way reduces itself to so little, is so meager and poor in relation to the fullness and richness of really religious insight [*Erkenntnis*], that one would have to mourn the lot of the human spirit if it were not able to gain greater insight.¹²

In his final analysis, Schelling argues that both Hegel and Jacobi correctly perceived the need for positive philosophy, beyond negative rationalism, and yet both failed to reach this “greater insight” due to a questionable assumption in their approaches. Both Hegel and Jacobi tended to assume that reason’s highest activity is found in its ability to rise above historical contingency, that reasoning is essentially an ahistorical activity. But this assumption is precisely the point at issue. The alleged failures of Hegel and Jacobi to establish a positive philosophy of existence are instructive for Schelling. They reveal to him the weaknesses that must be avoided in his own attempts to develop this aspect of philosophy. First, Schelling must not begin by positing pure being with which his own consciousness could be shown to be identical at the end of a system—Hegel’s weakness. Second, he must not attempt to evade the problems of the beginning with appeals to mystical illuminations alone—Jacobi’s theosophical weakness. Schelling’s *Prius* must be an essentially historical concept which can account for the tensional paradoxes that come to light in all attempts to account for the absolute beginning of anything. The beginning of positive philosophy must be none other than the conceivable Beginning of the existing world.

2. THE POSITIVE *PRIUS* IN SCHELLING’S EXISTENTIAL PHILOSOPHY

In order to understand Schelling’s attempt to transcend the negative philosophy of Hegel and Jacobi, it will be helpful to consider how the later Schelling attempts to transcend that which most

¹² *Ibid.*, 170, 176.

resembled negative philosophy in his earlier work, his 1804 identity-philosophy. Schelling had attempted, before Hegel, to build a system of philosophy that began with the pre-reflective identity of the All. This beginning allowed him intelligibly to hypothesize the substance of the world as pure being. However, it also came with an inherent weakness. It effectively reduced particular beings only to the status of questionable appearances of the All. Schelling perceived this to be a limitation. Even though his identity-philosophy had pure being at the beginning, unlike its concluding position in a typically negative philosophy, it still encountered the same difficulty as the latter. Schelling's ability to understand the existence of the world was not significantly improved when he assumed that the conceptual result of negative philosophy is actually the principle of the world. This move simply shifted the problem, it would seem, from reflective to pre-reflective types of conceptual deduction without any significant difference in the results. The real world remained a questionable illusion of a static concept even in Schelling's version of the identity philosophy. What is more, Schelling's thinking remained ahistorical, or so it seemed. Its appeal to the identity of thought and being was, with some qualifications, consistent with Eleatic philosophy in ancient Greece. In fact, however, Schelling's early attempt to understand the substantial identity of all things was not simply another type of *a priori* rationalism. It was the beginning of his account of how a philosopher's knowledge of *a priori* principles is derived from experience. The hypothetical "All" of the identity-philosophy was the undifferentiated beginning of what would later become the hypothetically differentiated *Prius* of his positive philosophy of existence.

Plato's writings played a significant role in this transition. Even in the 1804 identity-philosophy Schelling argues, against Kant's understanding of the matter, that Plato had properly conceived of "ideas" as inherently divine, rather than innately human.¹³ It is the Platonic account

¹³ Cf., *supra*, 144-5.

of ideas that becomes the catalyst for Schelling's development of the *Potenzenlehre*, the existential *Prius* of his positive philosophy.¹⁴ Put differently, the *a priori* in positive philosophy is not the human mind *per se*; there are no "innate ideas" to which it appeals. Rather its ground is the manifold of causes, the Platonic "ideas" or Schellingian "potencies," which are said to be united by their substantial divinity. Unlike Plato, however, Schelling claims that the potency of the divine can come to be known only in the light of history. His turn to historical studies amounts to the broadest possible turn toward *a posteriori* reasoning. This is a necessary step in a philosophy of existence; for "that which *is* can only be understood *a posteriori*; what is understood *a priori* is only what *cannot* be otherwise. Everything [*Es*] does not hang together as smoothly and simply as one thinks, but rather in an emphatically wonderful and, if you like, inconsistent way."¹⁵

What may be true of the inconsistency of everything (*Es*), Voegelin's "It-reality," is certainly true of Schelling's thought therein. His development of the positive philosophy is truly a "wonderful" odyssey. What is potentially confusing about its development is that it appears to have two beginnings, only the latter of which is the substantial beginning to which it seeks to point: First, it "begins" with an empirically dialectical presentation of the *Potenzenlehre*, which includes an account of that which (is) before being; second, it begins with the assumption that the potencies of the *Potenzenlehre* form the divine unity of the actual world. The first "beginning" starts by reasoning from individual experiences to an account of the absolutely potent beginning of all things in the divine. Schelling knows that this may appear to result in no more than the establishment of

¹⁴ Cf., *Die Weltalter*, *Werke* I,8: 289-90.

¹⁵ Schelling, *Zur Geschichte der neueren Philosophie*, *Werke* I,10: 171-2 (I have modified Bowie's translation). That which "cannot be otherwise" is the past. This forms the ground of "God's nature" and human understanding therein. To be sure, the past can be understood otherwise, but it cannot be otherwise than what it was (Cf., *Die Weltalter*, *Werke* I,8: 259). In the quoted passage, Schelling is relatively unconcerned with logical inconsistencies, because he thinks that the frustration of formal logic, or negative reason (*Vernunft*), is the only way to a truly positive development of the understanding (*Verstand*) (Cf., *Werke* I,10: 174).

an *a priori* structure of the human mind, the proper result of negative philosophy. But this discussion takes one only to the end of the first “beginning.” This discussion must progress, in what amounts to a second beginning, to a more broadly historical account of divine priority. In other words, Schelling turns to discuss how the potentiality of the divine has come to be relatively actualized, and likewise known, in the history of mythology and revelation.

This entire process can be described in a different way. The two movements or “beginnings” resemble (in Plato’s *Republic*) Socrates’ ascent from the “cave” to the “upper region,” and his descent back to the city of Athens, where the memory of the transcendent measure of all things is retained as that which causes the order of appearances. Schelling describes the interplay between negative and positive aspects of philosophy in a similar way: “Negative philosophy is only a *philosophia ascendens* (ascending from below), where we can see immediately that it will have only logical significance; and positive philosophy is *philosophia descendens* (descending from above to below). It is therefore only the *ensemble* which achieves the complete circle of philosophy.”¹⁶ The “ascents” of Socrates and Schelling may have certain similarities. However, that to which they “descend” is quite different, at least in terms of its scope. Socrates descends to the city of Athens in its historical particularity. Schelling, in Christian perspective, descends to the *civitas terrena* in general, which must attempt to account for changes in the eternal God’s self-revelations throughout the entire history of the world.

This explanation has its limitations. First of all, positive philosophy does not “descend” merely to a world of relatively true and false appearances. It descends to what cannot be otherwise, to the objectivity of the historical past. Divine or “theo-thetic” history becomes its true ground. Second, Schelling insists that this two-fold approach is what comprises the unity of positive

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 151 n. 1.

philosophy *per se*. In other words, the negative character of the “ascent” is not what grounds the later “descent” of positive philosophy. Schelling attempts to argue that the reverse is true. “[N]egative philosophy is founded,” properly speaking, “only with [the historical consciousness of] positive philosophy; because it is only thanks to the latter that the former becomes certain of its position and that it is placed in a state of resting in itself, equal to itself, and in its natural limits.”¹⁷ In other words, the negative “ascent” is properly made only with the consciousness that one’s efforts have been, to some degree, prepared by the insights of others in the history of philosophy. This situation, Schelling maintains, will hold true for all attempts to establish a purely negative philosophy of reason. All attempts to purify reason in a transcendental perspective can be valid only if they consciously acknowledge that “purity,” “transcendence” and “reason” are terms which have been differentiated historically. Thus, all reflection on experience must come to terms with the fact that experience itself is, to some degree, determined by the history of experience and symbolization, the history which contributes to the formation of one’s “own” consciousness.

The complexity of this matter has been summarized by Schelling when he writes that in positive philosophy “the world is in the process of becoming educed or conceptualized *a priori*.”¹⁸ Numerous formulations such as this have led one interpreter of Schelling to express clear reservations about his philosophical method: “Unclear, perhaps even in his own mind, as to whether his aim is the empirical verification of *a posteriori* propositions or the graphic exemplification of *a priori* propositions, [Schelling] tries to have it both ways. As a result, he often seems to undercut himself in either endeavor.”¹⁹ Beach’s apparent frustration is understandable. But Schelling may have a substantial point to make: Beyond propositional reasoning, perhaps the order of reality is such

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 155.

¹⁸ In Schelling’s words, “*die Folge (die Welt) a priori hergeleitet oder begriffen wird*” (*Philosophie der Offenbarung, Werke II,3: 130 n. 1*).

¹⁹ Beach, *The Potencies of God(s)*, *op. cit.*, 202.

that one must devise an existential logic that allows one to “have it both ways,” because that is how “it” is. Perhaps Schelling’s admittedly “inconsistent” articulation of the *Prius* of positive philosophy hangs together, nonetheless, in a “wonderful” way.²⁰

3. ACTUALIZATION OF THE POTENCIES IN INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCE

Matter (A¹, B)

The positive philosophy begins, in its dialectical mode, with an account of relatively pure “non-being.” This is symbolized as the pure potency -A or A¹. As a “potency,” it has the potential either to remain relatively pure or to become relatively impure, impotent, or actualized. When this potency becomes relatively actual, as it eventually does in Schelling’s account, it amounts to the divine’s initial act of “blind” self-enclosure or “contraction.” This relative activity is symbolized as the transition from A¹ to B.²¹ This primordial contraction, this self-making enclosure of the divine ground is the beginning of the beginning of positive philosophy. The fact that Schelling begins with a restless negation appears to involve him in the same problems he criticized at the beginning of Hegel’s *Logic*. But Schelling would insist that this is not the case. Hegel’s mistake, according to Schelling, was to think that his restless negation (pure being=nothing) was a *bona fide* concept of pure reason. Schelling maintained that it was not. This notion is, in fact, properly derived only from experience. Hegel only tacitly remembered the experience of existence in the formulation of his

²⁰ My account of this matter will draw upon a variety of texts from Schelling’s *Spätphilosophie*, as I have defined it. This is necessary, I think, in order to achieve optimum clarity with respect to a potentially obscure subject matter. At times, Schelling’s attempt to articulate a certain point is clearer in a relatively early text than it is in his later attempts to readdress the same point—and *vice versa*. At all times, my own account will attempt to remain faithful to Schelling’s mature understanding of the existential *Prius* of positive philosophy. Thus, my quotations from earlier texts always have his latest understanding in mind.

²¹ On the transition from A¹ to B, see *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen, Werke* I,7: 429 (here the transition is symbolized as A to B); *Philosophie der Mythologie, Werke* II,2: 86-7; B is also described at II,1: 391; I,10: 130; I,8: 215. Schelling equates B with the “Platonic” unlimited, τὸ ἄπειρον (II,2: 113; also *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Werke* II,3: 226).

initiating concept, insisting all the while that no empirical presuppositions entered into his logic. Schelling actively remembers existence and says: "Contraction [*Contraction*]. . . marks the beginning of all reality. For this reason, it is the contracting rather than the expanding nature that possesses a primordial and grounding force. Thus the beginning of creation amounts indeed to a *descent* of God [A⁰]; He properly descends into the Real [A¹], contracts Himself entirely into the Real [B]." ²² This contraction does not mark the creation of visible matter. It is only the condition of the possibility for beings to exist out of that which is relatively non-being. In other words, the primordial contraction "implies a beginning *of* time, though not a beginning *in* time. God himself is not, therefore, being placed in time." ²³ But this contraction still means that the manifest world will ultimately be the result of God's initially unconscious, self-materialization. This notion suggests a blind egotistical principle at the base of everything that lives, including the life which is God.

Schelling knows that "to the dogmatic view, which is considered orthodox," this notion will be repulsive. The "dogmatists" Schelling has in mind are negative philosophers who speak of God only as an "entirely self-centered essence, thereby separating Him from all creation." ²⁴ By contrast, Schelling argues that that which is truly "self-centered" in God is relative non-being, rather than "essence." The beginning of being, in other words, is beyond being. Schelling defends his account against what has come to be known as onto-theology. He insists that this primordial act "does not imply anything unworthy of God but, in fact, it is this descent that marks the greatest act for God. . . . By contrast, a metaphorically elevated God will benefit neither our minds nor our hearts." ²⁵

²² Schelling, *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen, Werke* I,7: 429 (Pfau's translation has been modified slightly; I have added the bracketed symbols for the emerging potencies).

²³ *Ibid.*, 430 (Pfau's translation).

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 438.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 429.

Schelling begins with the primordial contraction of God in order to account for revelation in the *a posteriori* logic of existence. This beginning is based on the existential premise that anything revealed was previously concealed, anything disclosed was previously enclosed. Hence, Schelling writes: "that which negates all revelation must be made the basis of revelation."²⁶ The relative transition from A^1 to B is occasioned by the realization that the existential logic of the beginning requires a certain activity, the relative actualization (B) of the relatively pure potential for unconscious self-hood (A^1).²⁷

Consciousness (A^2) and Self-Conscious Spirit (A^3)

The actualization of B is relative because it retains its potentiality *vis-à-vis* the other potencies. As soon as B starts to become actual, as the material antithesis of spirit, its spiritual thesis (A^2) and their synthesis (A^3) are instantaneously implied.²⁸ The simultaneity of the potencies is also symbolized as $A^1=B^3$. Schelling explains:

Where B is yet found in the highest power, A appears necessarily in the lowest power. This ($A^1=B^3$) is the expression of gravity. In the dynamic process, where the previously mute substance already gives off signs of life, this substance itself is already diminished as B, that is, as Nonbeing, by one power. Hence it is B^2 , whereas being has been increased by one

²⁶ Schelling, *Die Weltalter, Werke* I,8: 223, also 317-18 (Bolman translation). This type of thinking is normally associated with Heidegger's later work, specifically the tensions he describes between the concealment/unconcealment, or forgetfulness (*lethe*) and remembrance (*aletheia*) of being. See *Zur Sache des Denkens* (Tübingen: Max Niemeyer Verlag, 1969), *On Time and Being*, Joan Stambaugh, trans. (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1972), 1-24; 55-73. For a brief account of how Heidegger read and transformed Schelling, see Wayne J. Froman, "Schelling's *Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom* and Heidegger's Thought," *International Philosophical Quarterly* 30/4 (December, 1990): 465-80. Froman interprets the text by Schelling that was most important to Heidegger.

²⁷ Cf. *Die Weltalter, Werke* I,8: 234 (freedom), 220 & 225 (decision). That which ultimately causes the transition from A^1 to B, it would seem, is the divine freedom (A^0) beyond the tensions that are coming to light as the potential actualization of matter (B) and spirit (A^2) in the unified life of intelligible nature (A^3). However, Schelling also accords a significant measure of "freedom" and "decision" to B in its purely blind subjectivity. The different degrees of freedom between A^0 and B are perhaps best described as follows. Since the "authentic freedom" of B "does not consist in the power to be. . . but in the power not to be" (II,3: 209), then the authentic freedom of A^0 should consist in the greater freedom to be or not to be (Cf., *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Werke* II,4: 353).

²⁸ Cf. *Die Weltalter, Werke* I,8: 261. The dialectic of antithesis, thesis, synthesis is also suggested when Schelling makes the following symbolic equations: $-A=B$, $+A=A^2$, $\pm A=A^3$ (Cf., *Philosophie der Mythologie, Werke* II,1: 336).

power, so that the whole formula reads $A^2=B^2$. Here nonbeing and being are still in a state of equilibrium; hence the dynamic period of nature is that of a struggle, which does not yet result in any solid product.²⁹

With these formulations, Schelling attempts to account for how differences can appear to be real, *i.e.*, for how non-being can be said to be. He claims that non-being (B) is intelligible only in relation to the other potencies, which are properly coming to be in their own rights. It does not become fully actualized in human experience. Put differently, something in "God's nature" always remains hidden. This point accounts for the experience of God as a *deus absconditus*. Schelling contends that "the negating power [in God's nature] does not cease." Even after an extremely long and complex chain of historical developments leading to experiences of divine revelation, Schelling maintains that "God cannot become a revealed God from being a hidden one, in such a way that he would cease to be a hidden one." Something divine always remains obscure in God's immanent nature (B). The same holds true for God's transcendent essence (A^0). Even "[t]hat highest spirituality and ineffability of God cannot be changed into intelligibility and comprehensibility, as water was changed into wine at the Galilean wedding."³⁰ These points are important, for they speak against Voegelin's claim that Schelling's thought has "gnostic" inclinations.³¹ On the contrary, Schelling is suggesting that the transcendence of the mind into material nature and the freedom of its spirit beyond nature is equally obscure.

These abstract potencies of the divine are ostensibly taken from human experience. They are not offered as pieces of empty speculation. Thus far, Schelling has described only what is

²⁹ Schelling, *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen, Werke* I,7: 451-2 (Pfau's translation). This is a rare passage. Normally, Schelling refers to the process of nature only with the symbols $A^1=B$, A^2 , A^3 . That is, when A^2 becomes relatively actual, he normally does not use the symbol B^2 to denote this actuality. Why is this? It would appear that Schelling wants to emphasize the primordially grounding power of B in nature, that matter does not disappear but continues to prevail even after the actualization of the relatively spiritual potencies (A^2 & A^3).

³⁰ Schelling, *Die Weltalter, Werke* I,8: 245, 256.

³¹ Cf., *supra*, 33.

experienced when one searches for the beginning of existence. In this search, he contends, the conscious mind (A^2) always encounters its own beginning in obscurity ($A^1 \rightarrow B$).³² It seems as though something actively resists intellectual penetration. When one begins to reflect on one's own past, let alone its beginning, one discovers that the vast majority of one's past cannot be remembered. One knows that, in a sense, all of the past was and is still "there." But the majority of experiences hide themselves, so to speak, releasing only fragmentary memories into the relative future that has become one's present. Stated proto-ontologically, this "hiding" is the work of B, the divine self-enclosure, the coming-to-be before being. This beginning is experienced by human beings as though it were nothing, as a contrary type of negation ($\mu\eta\ \epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu\alpha\iota$). But Schelling is careful to stress that the beginning is not nothing at all, the contradictory type of negation ($\omicron\iota\kappa\ \epsilon\acute{\iota}\nu\alpha\iota$).³³ One knows that the past is still "there." Accordingly, Schelling rejects the doctrine of a *creatio ex nihilo* as a misconstrual of these types of negation. He writes: "All finite beings have been created out of [relative] nonbeing yet not out of *nothing*."³⁴ Nonbeing appears to us "as nothing," because it is actually becoming something.³⁵

The other potencies must experience matter (B) in the same way, according to Schelling, because "matter is nothing but the unconscious aspect of God . . . [I]n seeking to exclude it from Himself [$A^1 \rightarrow B$], on the one hand, He also strives to integrate it with Himself, on the other hand; He seeks to raise it to form, to transfigure it—although subordinate—into His superior essence and to evoke consciousness *from* this unconscious matter."³⁶ It is from the divine's material ground (B), this unconsciously egotistical, self-loving beginning, that the divine-as-erotic-spirit (A^2) can stand

³² Cf., *Die Weltalter. Werke* I,8: 262.

³³ On the two types of negation see *Philosophie der Mythologie, Werke* II,1: 288-9; also II,2: 32f.

³⁴ *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen, Werke* I,7: 436 (Pfau's trans.); also *Die Weltalter, Werke* I,8: 221-2.

³⁵ Cf., *Zur Geschichte der neueren Philosophie, Werke* I,10: 99, 100, 134.

³⁶ *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen, Werke* I,7: 435 (Pfau's translation).

apart from its own ground. Since the divine is also other-loving (A^2), it can exist from its own material ground (B) and ultimately become conscious of itself as the intelligible being of existence (A^3).³⁷ A complex series of relations results. When B is relatively actual, then A^2 and A^3 are relatively *in potentia*; they are potent for their actuality. When A^2 is relatively actual, the same potential relativity holds for B and A^3 . It is likewise the case with the relative actuality of A^3 and the relative potentiality of B and A^2 .

This series of relations is fundamentally comprised of the systolic tension between B (systole) and A^2 (diastole). But the latter has a limit ($=A^3$) to which it can expand. This third term is needed, Schelling argues, in order to account for nature as a process; for if spirit (A^2) could immediately transform matter (B) into itself, there would be no creative tension between matter and spirit, no generative development or life in nature (A^3).³⁸ In the human soul, the unconscious (B) could be transformed immediately and completely into consciousness (A^2), if there were no reflective distance—*i.e.*, self-consciousness (A^3)—separating them. Self-consciousness is the “seed,” the product, of the creative tension between conscious and unconscious dimensions of the soul. Schelling describes this process with an image from visible nature: “A tree, for example, develops continually from the root [B] to the fruit [A^3], and when it has arrived at the summit it again throws everything off, reverts to the state of barrenness [A^1], and again makes itself into a root [$A^1 \rightarrow B$], only to rise anew. The whole activity of the plant goes toward the production of seed, only to start afresh and by a new developmental process produce more seeds, and then begin over again.” As with visible nature, so too with the intelligible process of the entire universe:

³⁷ For summary accounts of the relations between these natural potencies see: *Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen, Werke* I,7: 430, 451; *Die Weltalter, Werke* I,8: 252, 261-2; *Philosophie der Mythologie, Werke* II,1: 336 (where $-A=B$, $+A=A^2$, and $\pm A=A^3$), 391; II,2: 377, 394-9.

³⁸ Cf., *Die Weltalter, Werke* I,8: 228-9.

That original, necessary, and lasting life thus indeed ascends from the lowest [B] to the highest [A³], but, having arrived at the latter, it immediately returns to the beginning in order to rise from this again. And only here do we attain the complete concept of that primal nature (after which all individual concepts [B, A², A³], that only had to be posited in order to attain this complete concept, must again be removed)—namely, that primal nature is a life eternally revolving in itself, a kind of circle, since the lowest always flows into the highest, and the highest again into the lowest Of course the distinction of higher and lower again is annulled in this continual circular movement. . . Even the concept of beginning and end is again annulled in this rotation.³⁹

Once matter and spirit bear fruit, A³ returns to A¹, and the whole process starts all over again, thus completing the rotary motion of nature.⁴⁰ In human experience, the seed of self-consciousness eventually falls into its unconscious ground, specifically when it searches for its origin. To extend the metaphor, when self-consciousness returns to its origin it decomposes and fertilizes the unconscious. This dissolution of the self is said to create “angst” in the ego (A¹→B) and a fervent desire for consciousness (A²), which ultimately yields higher self-consciousness (A³) as the human “tree” grows in an individual life.⁴¹ Such growth has a limit, which has been reached in the consciousness of this cyclical process.

Schelling does not take the self-consciousness attained at the end of his reflections and project it back into the beginning in order to found a system with self-consciousness as its ground. This step was, in Schelling’s estimation, the essential mistake of Fichte and Hegel. It amounts to a nonempirical flight from reality as experienced in their works. In order to avoid this problem, Schelling remembers the order of experience that brought him to this relative conclusion and realizes that his philosophy of history must begin with the most primordial beginning of all that exists: God’s unconsciously egotistical nature, symbolized by the contraction (A¹→B), the antithesis of consciousness and self-conscious spirit.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, *Werke* I,8: 231, 229 (Bolman translation).

⁴⁰ For discussion of this “rotary motion” of nature, see *ibid.*, 220, 231, 246; and *Philosophie der Mythologie*, *Werke* II,1: 324.

⁴¹ *Die Weltalter*, *Werke* I,8: 336.

4. ACTUALIZATION OF THE POTENCIES IN WORLD HISTORY

Thus far, the only temporal aspect of the *Potenzenlehre* discussed has been that which could be drawn from the "history" of one's individual experiences. Any mature human from most historical periods could understand the type of thinking on experience involved in the preceding discussion. Indeed, as far as Schelling understood the matter, the level of consciousness developed hitherto is only "pagan" or mytho-logical. It lacks a proper sense of freedom. The potencies are equivalent to (some of the) pagan gods (with the disputable exception of A⁰), and the cyclical aspect of nature appears to be almost wholly deterministic. But Schelling argues that human consciousness does not develop strictly along natural lines. At discernable points in history, the notion of God's transcendental freedom from nature is revealed to human beings and becomes a constitutive factor in the order of their souls. The extent to which this discovery determines the present order of consciousness comes to light. Schelling argues, only when the (negative) philosophy of personal experience is expanded to include the entire history of the human race. Thus, in his positive philosophy of history, Schelling seeks to understand how consciousness has risen from its naturally divine ground to a more comprehensive understanding of reality as the interplay of necessity and freedom. In other words, he attempts to relive the entire past of nature and history in the relative present of his "own" consciousness.

What follows is a summary account of how Schelling understands the divine potencies of nature to manifest themselves in the history of mythology (=nature) and revelation (=the emerging freedom of nature in history). This outline is intended only to fulfill the limited aims of this chapter. It is sufficient to reveal the importance of key themes in Schelling's positive philosophy for comparison with Voegelin's historiography. It is by no means an exhaustive account of Schelling's philosophy of historical existence. Schelling developed his positive philosophy over the course of four decades. He produced several volumes of work, published only posthumously, in which its

details are elaborated. Even so, despite the extensive size of this work, it is possible for it to be summarized in a way that avoids oversimplification; for Schelling has aided his interpreters in this respect. In his *Philosophy of Revelation*, Schelling produces a two-lecture summary (Lectures XVIII & XXI) of his entire *Philosophy of Mythology*. This summary will serve as a basic guide through the elaborate positive philosophy, except where it does not address points that Voegelin later takes up from the *Philosophy of Mythology*.

From the perspective of his own historical situation, Schelling understands the order of history to progress from relative monotheism to the absolute monotheism by which history itself will eventually be transcended.⁴² This general pattern becomes highly differentiated in the whole of Schelling's *Philosophy of Mythology* and *Philosophy of Revelation*. Schelling elaborates a pre- to post-historical progression that develops along three distinguishable types of religion, none of which is a static unity unto itself: mythological religion, revealed religion and philosophical religion.⁴³

Primordial Consciousness (*Urbewußtseyn*) and The Fall

Schelling's historiography begins by hypothesizing the absolute unity of God, which he calls the first notion that presents itself to the spirit.⁴⁴ This beginning, a legacy from the identity-philosophy, transfers the absolute from the beginning of consciousness to the beginning of all historical differentiation. That which causes the beginning of all differentiations, both in divine nature and human consciousness, is a cosmic Fall. Prior to this, a primordially unified humanity is said to have existed in completely unconscious identity with divine nature, lacking knowledge both

⁴² Schelling finds this historical drive toward monotheism to be implied already in "the oldest document" of the world, namely *Genesis*, where a tenuous unity of God(s), the "Elohim, is found to be in historical tension with the emerging unity of the God "Jehovah." See *Philosophie der Mythologie, Werke* II,1: 145ff., 161ff., 174; II,2: 47f.; *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Werke* II,3: 366-7 n.1; II,4: 121-3; also on the greatest antiquity of *Genesis* see *Die Weltalter, Werke* I,8: 331.

⁴³ On the three types of religion, see *Philosophie der Mythologie, Werke* II,1: 243-52.

⁴⁴ *Philosophie der Mythologie, Werke* II,2: 24.

of itself and of the divine. In other words, humanity lacked self-consciousness. According to the relevant mythology in *Genesis*, Adam and Eve did not know that they were “naked” before the Fall.

Schelling’s account of the Fall is ambiguous. On the one hand, he says that primordial humanity has its proper guilt (*eigene Schuld*) in this matter. It was chased out of paradise when it chose to renounce its former equality with all of the potencies in order to become like one of them: the relatively material potential for self-willing (A¹).⁴⁵ On the other hand, Schelling knows that by assuming an unconscious identity between primordial humanity and divinity, the former cannot be blamed for “falling.” Humanity had no knowledge of differences between which it could have chosen freely. It was created, without knowledge (*Wissen*) of its condition, at the center of the deity (*im Zentrum der Gottheit*). Thus, in order to account for the “real divorce” between humanity and its “primordial standpoint,” an assumption without which the mythological stage of history becomes unintelligible as an attempt to regain a lost unity, Schelling argues that original sin (*Sündenfall*) must have come about by means of a process that transcended human consciousness and will. He writes:

The theogonic process which gives birth to mythology is a *subjective* process insofar as it unfolds itself in *consciousness* and manifests itself by the formation of representations [*Vorstellungen*]. But the causes [*Ursachen*] and, consequently, the objects of these representations are the *real* [*wirklich*] theogonic powers [*Mächte*] themselves, through which primordial consciousness is [found to be essentially] God-positing [*das Bewußtseyn ursprünglich das Gott=setzende ist*]. The content of the process is not merely *represented* potencies, but the *potencies themselves* [*die Potenzen selbst*].

The “subjective” process occurs in the subject of human consciousness in general. This means that the process is not merely subjective in the individual sense; it is “objectively religious,” since it pertains to the whole of humanity.⁴⁶ Thus, in its second aspect, Schelling does not say that the primordial Fall is caused by a self-consciously human will. The Fall begins to unfold as a process of naturally differentiating potencies. This beginning of the “theogonic process” of history causes

⁴⁵ Cf. *ibid.*, II,1: 142.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, II,1: 205-8; also *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Werke* II,3: 378-80.

humans to perceive a fundamental difference between themselves and the divine, and to represent the latter as something exclusively “outside” of themselves. This representation of the divine is erroneous, according to Schelling, but blame for the error cannot be laid simply upon humans. The Fall is not the result of human freedom, but of a natural process in which human consciousness was completely entwined. It would seem that later humans, with a greater consciousness of historical freedom, could blame God for the Fall after all.

Schelling would likely attempt to solve this problem by saying that God foreknew all of this.⁴⁷ Therefore, God appears to have caused the Fall as a means to a higher end. Beyond human consciousness, God begins the transformation from A¹ to B. This brings about the initial awareness in human consciousness of the difference between humanity and divinity, self and world, the inner and the outer realms of experience. In mythological terms, Adam and Eve become relatively self-conscious, realizing that they are “naked,” as the divine potential for self-hood starts to become actualized. This sense of division yields the condition of the possibility for divine revelation. Without a sense of the difference between humanity and divinity, Schelling argues, the latter could never reveal itself to the former.⁴⁸ This difference can come about only by means of God’s self-differentiation.⁴⁹ It is not primarily a matter of self-consciously human action. Thus, in historical retrospect, the Fall appears to be a felicitous fault, that which ultimately brings humanity from the blind necessity of its divine nature into the consciousness of the “true God” as its essential freedom. To blame or blaspheme either God or humanity for the Fall amounts to an anachronistic error. It tacitly uses the consciousness of freedom, which is attained only after a long period of historical

⁴⁷ Cf., *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, Werke II,4: 9-10.

⁴⁸ *Philosophie der Mythologie*, Werke II,1: 179; II,2: 119ff.; also *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, Werke II,3: 188.

⁴⁹ *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, Werke II,4: 72.

development, and brings this against either the giver or the recipients of this gift.⁵⁰

The Epoch of Matter (B): “Relative Monotheism” and “Mythological Religion”

Beyond laying blame, Schelling contends that the Fall sets in motion the transition from A¹ to B. This transition occurs slowly. At first, it yields the first of the three types of religion, specifically the beginning of “mythological religion,” or “relative monotheism.”⁵¹ History, properly speaking, has yet to begin. Schelling speculates about the origin of historical consciousness in an absolutely prehistorical (*vorgeschichtliche*) time.⁵² The absolute prehistory of consciousness yields the religion of God’s blind nature *par excellence*. In retrospect, Schelling says that what occurred in human consciousness at this time was the relative actualization of the first potency: the systole, which immediately begins to imply the relative diastole of the second, and their unity in the third. Yet the plurality of potencies must have been completely unknown to the people of the earliest religion, Schelling supposes: for they knew of only one difference, that which separates the internal and the external, the human and the divine, respectively. This is the age of “Zabism” (astral religion), where a relatively innocuous deity, usually a sky-god (*e.g.*, Uranus=A¹), is thought to envelop all natural differences within its comprehending presence. Schelling says that this is not the age of mythological “symbolization.” The ability to form symbols implies a reflectively conscious distance between the symbol and what is symbolized. Zabism is the religion of immediate “inspiration,” the tautegorical religion *par excellence*, where the mythological deity is identical to

⁵⁰ Once again, Schelling himself is not always this clear. The ambiguity between God or humanity as the real cause of the Fall returns when he rejoins this discussion in his *Philosophie der Offenbarung* (II.3: 355-60). This ambiguity can be clarified, I suggest, only by focusing on Schelling’s central point: the consciousness of freedom (A³) always has unconscious necessity (B) as its ground.

⁵¹ Schelling does not provide specific dates for the periods of history he discusses. He understands them to be relatively different periods along a presupposed line of time.

⁵² Schelling distinguishes between two terms for what English calls “history.” First, *Geschichte* refers to the mere passage of time; second, *Historie* refers to the increasingly self-conscious description of events (*Cf.*, *Philosophie der Mythologie, Werke* II,1: 235-6).

what it presents itself to be.⁵³

The Epoch of Consciousness (A²): “Simultaneous Polytheism”

Eventually, the consciousness of perceived differences in nature asserts itself to the point where other natural phenomena are suspected as possible equals to the divinity of the Sky. Of particular importance in this period is the emerging consciousness that the principle god, a masculine figure, needs to have a future. This need is expressed, Schelling argues, when the principle god is worshiped in feminine form: for example, Uranus becomes Urania. Once the masculine god is transformed into or weds a feminine deity, the immediate future of the gods is ready to be born: A².⁵⁴ This transformation yields an incomplete form of polytheism, which Schelling calls “simultaneous polytheism.” This is not the true form of polytheism, he contends, but merely its nascent stage.⁵⁵ Thus far, human life remains relatively tranquil and, most importantly, unified. Humanity has yet to separate consciously into distinct peoples. However, it has begun to feel ambivalent about its external gods. Schelling contends that this ambivalence arises in human consciousness because A² is approximating its necessary transformation from being the *potency* of nature’s spiritual order to being the *principle* of this order. In other words, spirit is starting to bring order out of the relative chaos of material nature—all within human consciousness.

Great violence is portrayed in the mythology of this time. Consequently, Schelling supposes that the emergence of spiritual order was not experienced by humanity as a peaceful transition from the material basis of order in previous times. Matter (now wholly B) begins forcefully to resist the process of its spiritualization, and humans begin to suffer from not having a god to which they can

⁵³ *Philosophie der Mythologie, Werke* II,2: 175-88; 197ff. (on Zabism); II,2: 248-9 (on the distinction between the immediately inspired [*inspirirte*] and the relatively free or reflective character of the truly symbolic [*symbolische*]).

⁵⁴ *Cf., Philosophie der Offenbarung, Werke* II,3: 389ff.

⁵⁵ *Philosophie der Mythologie, Werke* II,1: 120ff.

literally point with the assurance they once felt. In “Greek” mythology, Uranus becomes Cronos (A¹ becomes an angry B that eats its children as soon as they are born) and resists the emerging spiritual order of Dionysus=A².⁵⁶ In “Babylonian” religion, an un-named God begins to challenge the supremacy of Mylitta.⁵⁷ In “Phoenician” and “Canaanite” religion, Melkart begins to challenge Baal.⁵⁸ Schelling understands the names of these deities to be equivalent terms denoting an experienced process throughout human consciousness as a whole. Consequently, at this point it is necessary to place ethnic names in quotation marks, because humanity is still thought to be substantially united. Schelling implies that anyone from this period could have recognized his or her gods, under different names, in any human society. In other words, humanity is still held together by the weakening primal force that has resisted spiritual differentiation all along—*i.e.*, B.

That which causes the differentiation of humanity into peoples is a “spiritual crisis [*geistige Krisis*].” This crisis comes about when an unseen spiritual order (A²) begins successfully to challenge the visible order of the world (B). It is from this crisis, which unfolds “in the ground of human consciousness itself,” that humanity divides consciously into different peoples.⁵⁹ The result is a proliferation of confusion caused by different languages, laws and myths—all of which come about from the crisis in consciousness. Schelling grants that there were tribal communities in existence before the emergence of people-constituting myths. But he denies that a collectivity of individuals suffices to account for the self-differentiated understanding of a “people.” Tribal societies, he implies, could still recognize one another to be part of “humanity,” since, before the emergence of spiritual order (A²), Matter (B) had no serious rival in human consciousness. Hence, Schelling emphasizes that a “people” is born at the same time as its myths, not before. No myth,

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, II,2: 286-92.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, II,2: Lecture XII.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, II,2: 307ff. For further discussion of these transformations, see Beach, *op. cit.*, 179-204.

⁵⁹ *Philosophie der Mythologie, Werke* II,1: 100f.; also 121, 129, 233; II,2: 172.

properly speaking, can be understood as the “invention” of an individual or relatively large collectivity, only to be passed on to an already constituted people.⁶⁰ Such “invention” implies that a self-reflective perspective had already been gained from the earliest times of humanity with respect to the difference between a people and its mythology. However, this implication is simply not granted, *ex hypothesi*, in Schelling’s speculation on prehistorical societies.

This is an important point for the accounts of religious and political motivation in the thought of both Schelling and Voegelin. Notice that the source of fundamental differentiation comes from “within.” Schelling writes that

an *inner*, and therefore irreversible [*unaufhebliche*] separation, as that which exists between peoples, cannot generally be the effect of external causes or natural phenomena. Volcanic eruptions, earthquakes, changes in the levels of the seas, and other such phenomena may suffice to explain the separation of humanity into similar parties but not into dissimilar ones. This latter can be the effect only of *inner* causes, arising from the breast [*Innern*] of homogenous humanity itself [*der homogenen Menschheit selbst*], because only these internal causes would be capable of decomposing a unity into distinct parties, and thus be [truly] natural causes.⁶¹

This claim requires further attention. Even if one grants Schelling’s central point, it is difficult to understand how a single spiritual crisis, which occurs throughout the nature of human consciousness in general, could suffice to cause the division of humanity into different peoples. In other words, how does one crisis cause different reactions? Would not the general nature of this crisis be experienced by all of humanity in the same way, thus causing all humans to welcome the emergence of spiritual order and to agree that their deities were poorly represented in the past? A general change should cause an equally general enlightenment, one would assume, thus sustaining the primordial unity of humanity. Schelling does not appear to be aware of this difficulty. However, he might have responded by having his readers reconsider the precise nature of this “crisis.” It is not caused simply by the appearance of spiritual order (A²), but by the resistance of Matter (B) to the

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, II,1: 62-3.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, II,1: 95.

imposition of order by the emerging Spirit. Matter, according to the *Potenzenlehre*, is inherently self-willing or blindly egotistical. Thus, when the essential nature of Matter becomes actualized, human consciousness responds in kind. Humans become increasingly egotistical; a chain reaction occurs; and the result is a series of apparently different separations of humanity into peoples. These separations are, however, all united by their commonly egotistical nature. This is how one change can cause a series of differences. The division of humanity into peoples does not become radical, with each individual person becoming his or her own “people,” because the power of B is always held in check by A² and its emerging A³.⁶² Eventually, however, the sense of separation between peoples does become acute, and individual humans begin to feel that their spiritual gods do not rule in other lands. The former authority of the material deities is challenged in an increasingly open fashion, and people start to become aware of the historical relativity of the gods and their sovereignty.

It takes another spiritual crisis, this time described as a *καταβολή*, or Ground-laying, to restore relative peace between conflicting notions in human consciousness that seek to describe the world’s order either as inherently material or spiritual. This “Ground-laying” is caused by the emergence of A³, the third potency turned principle, self-consciously maintaining the order of nature as subdued matter and vibrant spirit. Schelling summarizes the point of historical development thus far:

At first, there was only One Potency by which consciousness was exclusively dominated. . . . This first, initially exclusive and tolerating none other beside it, *admits* in turn a *second* potency—that which is destined to surmount the first. This admission is the first victory brought against the exclusivity of B, the first debasement of this to the Ground, the first Groundlaying [*Grundlegung*], or *καταβολή*, as I will call it. The exclusive *domination* [*Herrschaft*] of the unique principle presented itself in original religion: Zabism. From this point until the moment of the second *καταβολή*, where the first principle becomes the

⁶² Schelling does not think that any potency ever comes to complete dominance, at least in history; for if it did, the world would end as it is currently experienced.

object not merely of a possible [*möglichen*], but of an effective [*wirklichen*] overcoming, . . . we had to do with only two principles. But from now on we come to the effective overcoming [*Ueberwindung*, where B is returned to the potentiality of A¹]. To the extent that the initial principle—which is the cause of the entire tension—is brought back to itself [*in sein An-sich zurückgebracht wird*], it lives anew in relation . . . to the Highest, which must properly be the third potency, to which it is bound. From now on we have to do with three, that is, with the All [*Allheit*], the Totality of potencies.⁶³

Once again, as with the first “spiritual crisis,” that which brings the second potency into the future of the third is the appearance of a feminine deity. She will give birth to this future. For example, the Phrygian Cybele (=Rhea) is said to marry Cronos. Schelling takes this “marriage” to indicate a further softening of the principle god. Cybele is even described sometimes as the transformation of Cronos into a goddess. In any case, this union strengthens the efforts of the second potency and immediately begins to actualize the third.⁶⁴

**The Epoch of Self-Conscious Spirit (A³):
“Successive Polytheism” and “Complete Mythologies”**

Once the potency of self-conscious spirit (A³) becomes the principle source of order, the time of true or “successive polytheism” has arrived. Successive polytheism, as the name implies, refers to the supremacy of one god, which is succeeded by others in time.⁶⁵ This type of polytheism is, according to Schelling, the first truly substantial form of mythological religion. True polytheism emerges only when humanity begins to feel that all of its “external” representations of the gods are inaccurate. Humanity begins to question the materiality of the divine *per se*. At this stage, all three potencies are now represented in various world mythologies. And mythologists display an increasing awareness that the gods are limited: they are generated and succeed each other in time. Mythologists attain a considerable distance from their representations. They begin consciously to

⁶³ *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, Werke II,3: 396; also *Philosophie der Mythologie*, Werke II,2: 262 (first *katabolē*), 353 (second *katabolē*).

⁶⁴ Cf. *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, Werke II,3: 399-400.

⁶⁵ *Philosophie der Mythologie*, Werke II,1: 120ff.

“symbolize” the gods, in the strict sense of the word. The absolutely prehistoric (*vorgeschichtliche*) period changes into the relatively prehistoric (*vorhistorische*) period. It is a turbulent time, because the visible gods are, in some cases, completely divested of their divinity. Schelling finds only three “complete” mythologies in this period: the Egyptian, Indian, and Greek. He ranks these, respectively, as the relatively material, the completely spiritual, and the balance between material and spiritual types of order.

a.) Egyptian Mythology

The Egyptians have the greatest difficulty breaking away from the material ground of mythic representations: rather, Horus (A³) has the greatest difficulty subduing Typhon (B), now generally called Seth. The material god retains temples and devotees throughout the high period of Egyptian civilization. As Schelling says, commenting on the general character of Egyptian consciousness, “wherever a church is built to the good God [Horus=A³], the Devil [Typhon=B] builds himself a chapel.”⁶⁶ Schelling finds that smaller “chapels” continued to be built to Typhon immediately outside the larger “churches” to the other deities. This is a concrete indication, he thinks, that the Egyptians attempted to transcend the material gods from their past only with great difficulty. However, the strength of the material principle in Egyptian consciousness is also thought to have had its merits. It allowed Egyptian mythologists to remain aware of the material ground of spiritual order. This focus, in addition, allowed them to understand the principle gods as forming a unity, “a single, enlarged consciousness.”⁶⁷

b.) Indian Mythology, Buddhism and Chinese Atheism

A completely different style of representation is evident in Indian mythology. According

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, II,2: 389.

⁶⁷ *Cf.*, *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Werke* II,3: 401-04; also *Philosophie der Mythologie, Werke* II,2: 364-431.

to Schelling, the Indians understand their gods to be completely spiritual. But this elevated sense of spirit comes with a price: it undermines their sense of the gods' unity. "In Indian consciousness, the principle of the beginning [Brahma=B], that which is the ground and support of the entire process, has been completely dominated and annihilated by the superior potency [Shiva=A²]." Without a clear sense of the material ground of all the gods, each divinity acquires its own followers, and these become antagonistic towards one another. In their antagonism, the devotees simply imitate the actions of their gods. Even the highest divinity, whom Schelling takes to be Vishnu (A³), turns against his predecessors and calls for complete devotion from his followers. Thus, Schelling finds Indian mythology to be in a state of confusion: "[I]n place of an authentic mythology, produced in a natural way, we see here a mythology which is truly artificial." Indian mythology is unified only by its thematic sense of destruction. That which is destroyed is the past of the people, and especially the sense that its gods have supported one another in the historical process leading to their dominions.

The theme of destruction becomes emphatic in Indian Buddhism. "On the one hand, [this] is something foreign to authentic India," Schelling claims, "on the other hand, [it is] the product of a reaction against the mythological process, an antimythological tendency which, from its origins, traverses mythological phenomena." The great enigma here, for Schelling, is that Buddhism appears to be an historical regression in consciousness back to the monism of Parsi religion, where the Mithras appeared as confusions of matter and spirit not long before the first "spiritual crisis." Schelling concludes that "Buddhism, just like mysticism. . . .serves only to render complete the confusion of unfortunate Indian consciousness."⁶⁸ Buddhists resist the principle of spiritual order

⁶⁸ *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Werke* II,3: 405.

(A²) and its final subjugation (A³) of matter (B→A¹).⁶⁹ Such resistance is problematic in Schelling's account of the natural or necessary character of mythological development. It should not be able to occur, given the limited historical stage that natural consciousness has allegedly attained by this point. However, Buddhists reject traditional religion with a degree of freedom from mythological symbols which, according to Schelling, should be attained only with the historical appearance of Christ.

Conscious resistance to spiritual order among a limited group is not the only problem that begins to weaken the world-historical dimension of Schelling's *Potenzenlehre*. He is also faced with an earlier problem, the appearance of a stagnation or "standing-still [*Stillstehen*]" in the mythological development of the Persians. Schelling notes, from remarks by Herodotus, that the Persians were still worshipping their Mithra(s) in the material and cosmological manner of late Zoroastrianism well after the second "spiritual crisis," when other civilizations had already developed completely differentiated spiritual mythologies. The Persians worshiped the exterior cosmos directly—*i.e.*, without the relative interiority of temples and icons. They did so at a time when the Egyptians, Indians, and Greeks had begun to build temples and fashion icons. With the introduction of such artifacts into religious worship, these other peoples reveal to Schelling their increasing awareness that the divine is to be known primarily and specifically in human consciousness, rather than from the exterior cosmos in general. However, it seems that the Persians remained relatively unaware of this transition from cosmos to consciousness as the site where divinity is best experienced.⁷⁰ Schelling attempts to explain this problem by saying that a powerful priestly caste was likely responsible for holding back the Persians from the spiritual advancements already attained in other

⁶⁹ *Philosophie der Mythologie, Werke* II,2: Lecture XI; also 431-85 (Indian mythology), 486-520 (Indian & Buddhist religions contrasted).

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, II,2: 208-09.

civilizations. But he cites no evidence to support this claim; it is simply a conjecture. And, once again, Persian priests should not have had the freedom to resist mythological development, nor indeed the ability to persuade the Persians in general to resist such development; for this development was allegedly “irresistible” among other peoples.⁷¹

The problem of an inconsistent development of mythological religion in history becomes especially acute when Schelling confronts the “complete atheism” of China. He discovers, strictly speaking, that the Chinese never developed a mythology of their own. They even lack a proper word for God in their earliest language.⁷² Confucian, Taoist, and Buddhist elements in their tradition are later developments, which have nothing to do, Schelling argues, with “the essence of the Chinese.” In a state of relative isolation, the Chinese continued well beyond other civilizations to think of themselves as humanity *per se*. They did not become a people, *i.e.*, self-consciously “Chinese.” They did not make the mythological transition from material to increasingly spiritual symbolizations of divine order. While other civilizations were allegedly developing along the path indicated by the historical *Potenzenlehre*, the Chinese principle of order remained only the material State. This evidence of historical retardation leads Schelling to speak of the Chinese even as a “second humanity [*eine zweite Menschheit*]” — as a Chinese ecumene.⁷³

These anomalies should not have been able to occur, according to Schelling’s account of how the natural potencies actualize themselves in the universal history of human consciousness. During the epoch of “mythological religion,” human consciousness is still ostensibly dominated by the progressive actualization of natural, which is to say, universal potencies. Thus, one should find uniformity among the religious symbolizations of all contemporary traditions. But such is not the

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 210-11.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 527.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 555; the entire discussion of Chinese civilization is found in Lectures XXIII & XXIV.

case. Indian Buddhism, Persian religion, and the Chinese ecumene do not follow the progression of mythical symbolization in history that Schelling has, with some difficulty, shown to be unfolding in Occidental cultures. Chinese consciousness, in particular, appears to be inexplicably outside of nature's historical grasp. When faced with historical anomalies such as these, Schelling appeals to the claim that "the exception is what actually confirms the rule (*exceptio firmat regulam*)."⁷⁴ He is thus led occasionally to use Chinese culture as an exceptional measure against which the mythological progression itself can be defined in the majority of other cultures.⁷⁴ It is especially the Chinese exception that seems to persuade Schelling to qualify the historical dimension of the *Potenzenlehre* as an hypothetical account of the way that the divine comes to be known in consciousness.⁷⁵ However, the need for this qualification does not, he thinks, fundamentally undermine his vision of order in history *per se*. Why not? Due to his own historical position, Schelling already "knows" that the mythological process will come to its end in the only complete type of divine Revelation, *i.e.*, Christ's incarnation. Christian Revelation is presupposed by Schelling as the measure *par excellence* against which mythological religion itself can be defined and transcended. In other words, Schelling already "knows" that the philosophy of Revelation must encompass and guide the philosophy of mythology from the outset.⁷⁶

A fundamental problem has emerged in Schelling's historical philosophy, one that he does not sufficiently address. He has used a double standard in his attempt to define mythological religion or natural consciousness as such. On the one hand, the entire *Philosophy of Mythology*

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 236, 558-62.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 523. The historical development of the potencies is qualified as "hypothetical" in at least two other places: one with specific reference to the Fall (II,3: 360), the other more generally (II,4: 8). It is necessary to point out these qualifications, because Schelling is not always mindful of them. At times, he says unequivocally that history reveals an irrefutable "law" of progression in consciousness (*e.g.*, *Philosophie der Mythologie*, *Werke* II,2: 186-7).

⁷⁶ *Cf.*, *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, *Werke* II,4: 8-9.

attempts to delimit mythological religion by the historically superior standard of Christian Revelation. This is by far Schelling's main "exception" to the "rule" of natural mythology. On the other hand, from within the *Philosophy of Mythology* itself, Oriental culture is also occasionally used as a standard, an exception in its own right, against which mythological religion is defined. These standards are antithetical. The former, on Schelling's account, transcends a strictly mythological order of consciousness on historical grounds: God's self-revelation in Christ creates a definitive historical break with the mythological or natural consciousness of the past. However, according to Schelling, the Chinese do not develop a mythological or progressively historical degree of consciousness at all, and they offer a considerable level of resistance to the mythological traditions they encounter. The difference between these standards calls into question the universal scope of the *Potenzenlehre*. Either Christian Revelation, with its focus on historical consciousness, is the exceptional standard by which mythological religion is to be defined, or the relatively ahistorical nature of Chinese consciousness is the exceptional standard by which Schelling's historicization of nature is itself undermined. It seems that one cannot have it both ways.

Schelling attempts to have it both ways. He places Chinese and Christian levels of consciousness at opposite points on a scale, between which the mythological consciousness of other cultures is understood to progress toward the completely historical self-consciousness of his Christian present and beyond. The Chinese remain inexplicably "primitive," while mythological cultures "advance" to the point where revelatory consciousness has the historical grounds by which it can understand itself to be Revelation. The Chinese remain the negative measure compared to which both mythological and revelatory cultures appear to be advanced. It seems as though, after all, there is only one positive standard by which everything else is qualified historically: Christian Revelation. But this is not so. Recall that Schelling needs to show how consciousness develops with temporal and spatial universality in order for Revelation to be grounded in nature and exceptionally

true at a certain point in history. The enigma of China suggests that the nature of consciousness does not change in the history of humanity in general, and this is why Chinese civilization is available for Schelling to use as his second, albeit implicit, standard. His account is sound as far as it goes, but it overlooks a decisive point. It is open to the critique of cultural relativism. Schelling would have to admit that Chinese civilizations were also justified when they took mythological cultures as a measure against which to declare their own superiority. What does this entail for Schelling's project? In brief, it suggests that Providence is not providing Schelling with an historically universal measure with which to understand Revelation as a distinct exception to the rule of advancing mythological consciousness; it is not providing him with a consistent view of nature in history. Consequently, Schelling would have to admit that the universal God did not prepare humanity in general for this Revelation. In fact, most of humanity, the Orient, appears to have been left behind in the historical march toward Christian Revelation. But no such admission is forthcoming from Schelling. Despite this problem, he continues in his efforts to provide an account of the history of nature as an objective ground by which to understand supernatural Revelation. That is to say, he continues to read thematic changes in mythological religions as a *praeparatio evangelica*.

c.) Greek Mythology and the Mystery Religions

After giving an extensive account of Indian mythology and its antithesis in various forms of Buddhism, Schelling turns to examine what he considers to be the completion of mythological religions: Greek mythology and its perfection in the Mystery religions. In contrast to the violent gods of the Indians, the distinguishing characteristic of the Greek gods is said to be found in their gentle beauty.

[T]he Greek gods are born from a consciousness that delivers itself regularly and gently from the violence of the real principle [=B]; they are, therefore, beneficent apparitions or visions in which this—the real principle—disappears, to be sure, but still continues to be in its absence and effacement the type [of principle] which communicates to the nascent forms the reality [*Realität*], the certainty [*Bestimmtheit*], by virtue of which the Greek gods are

necessary representations, eternal, stable, not merely ephemeral moments (concepts). Greek mythology is the gentle death, the true euthanasia [*die wahre Euthanasie*] of the real principle, which in its expiration and going-under [*Untergehen*] still leaves in its place a world of charming and beautiful apparitions.⁷⁷

That which fundamentally distinguishes the mythological religion of the Greeks is said to be its ability to retain a considerable degree of balance between the material and spiritual principles. The Greeks develop exoteric=material and esoteric=spiritual forms of their religion, each of which is understood to depend upon the other.⁷⁸ In the exoteric sense, the gods are portrayed in physical terms, thus retaining the memory and history of the material principle upon which the other gods are based. In this sense, the Greeks retain what was strongest in Egyptian consciousness: the awareness of the material ground of spiritual order. However, some of the Greeks are also said to have attained the purely spiritual consciousness that characterized the Indians. These were primarily the people who formed the esoteric Mystery religions: both Dionysian and Eleusinian Mysteries dedicated to Demeter.

Schelling discusses the Mysteries in terms of their exoteric and esoteric aspects, and he assumes that an intimate connection held between these. But the properly esoteric aspect of the Mysteries is most important to him, because it is said to reveal the true beginning of the end of mythological consciousness *per se*.⁷⁹ Essentially, Schelling argues that the Mysteries contain “a hidden metaphysic [*eine verhüllte Metaphysik*]” and “a transcendental cosmogony [*eine transcendente Weltentstehungslehre*].” In effect, “the causes which are known in the Mysteries

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, II.3: 406.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 409.

⁷⁹ One might justifiably wonder how Schelling can presume to know the content of the esoteric teachings, since this was restricted to initiates. Schelling's account is based largely on three sources: (1) reports by contemporary and nearly contemporary witnesses (e.g., Plato, Plutarch, and Pausanias); (2) contemporary scholarship available to him (e.g., by Creuzer, Sainte-Croix, and Warburton); and (3) the assumption that the secret of the Mysteries was not fundamentally a matter of doctrine, but of the internal experience—the dramatic catharsis—that was said to come about as a result of the teachings.

are none other than the *general* causes which engendered the world.”⁸⁰ That is to say, the people who formed the Mysteries did so partially because they became aware that the gods of mythology are the potencies of nature in human consciousness. In other words, the initiates of the Greek Mysteries appear to have been first to discover an elemental form of the type of thinking that leads to Schelling’s *Potenzenlehre*. This discovery did not cause the initiates to become idealists. Schelling defends his understanding of the Mysteries particularly against neo-platonic interpretations of the same. He writes: “According to our explication, everything in the Mysteries is fact; all rests on a first event which, as in a tragedy, is pushed until its end. According to the neo-platonists, all is reflection and theorem; to us, all is the thing itself [*die Sache selbst*].”

It may seem that the adherents to the Mysteries reverted back to the beginning of mythological consciousness, when “inspirations” of the divine were immediately “tautegorical.” But this is not so. In the esoteric religions of Dionysus and Demeter, mythology itself becomes transparent simply as the means by which the potencies of nature express themselves in human consciousness. Accordingly, mythological religion itself is treated with “a free irony” by the initiates.⁸¹ This does not mean that the initiates were enlightened atheists, a clever group of intellectuals who formed secret societies based on the realization that the public gods were symbols of merely human experiences. Schelling rejects this account of the Mysteries, which he found in C.A. Lobeck and J.H. Voß.⁸² Rather, Schelling attends to the fact that new myths were produced by the initiates. He assumes that the distinctive feature of these myths was the self-consciousness of their production, *i.e.*, under the complete dominion of A³. And yet, unlike the previously mentioned cultures in which A³ became relatively actual, this potency is said to have caused the Greeks to

⁸⁰ *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Werke* II,3: 491.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 500, 512.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 457-9, 479-80.

become completely self-conscious, to look both retrospectively at the divine history which brought them to their present state of soul and prospectively toward the future of religion itself.

Retrospectively, the Mysteries taught “none other than the history of religious consciousness, or, to express it in an objective way, the history of God himself [*des Gottes selbst*], which, existing from his primordial non-spirituality [B], was overcome and transfigured to the point of perfect spiritualization [A³]. In this way, the ultimate content of the Mysteries is assuredly the completely spiritual, and, at the same time, unique God [*einige Gott*].” In other words, the Mysteries taught an historically limited version of Schelling’s philosophy of mythology: “[T]he history of the gods became the history of God. Accordingly, *instead* of becoming a fable or being *interpreted* as such, the history of the gods became much more a *verity*. It had its truth mainly in the history of God, which was exposed in the Mysteries. That which appeared on the exterior as the history of the gods was nothing but the interior history of God which had traversed divers moments.”

This is a remarkable claim. Once again, Schelling’s historicism begins to falter along another line. He seems to forget that the Greeks are supposed to have lacked the historical measure, God’s free self-revelation in Christ, by which reflective distance on mythology is allegedly given. How could a select group in Hellenic society have attained, much like Schelling himself, the awareness that mythology is symbolic for experiences of the divine without the principle “exception” to nature, Christian Revelation, by which Schelling ostensibly attains his own reflective distance on myth? Schelling is aware of this problem. Consequently, he is led to attribute a type of “revelation” to the Greeks. But he limits this type of revelation to “the human kind.”⁸³ The specific character of Greek revelation, much like Schelling also finds in the Jews, is limited to a dim awareness of the future of theophany. Even so, his presentation of the theology of the Mysteries begins to look even

⁸³ *Ibid.*, 494, 502, 525.

more like what he finds in Christian Revelation.

Schelling argues that the Mysteries taught an “interior history,” an esoteric theology of history that was essentially monotheistic. What is more, he insists that this monotheism could not have been merely “negative” or ahistorical, as in the subsequent development of Aristotelian theology, since the initiates retained a considerable degree of historical consciousness at the basis of their theological teachings. Rather, Schelling writes, “[t]he doctrines of the Mysteries could not have consisted in a purely *negative* monotheism, one which merely excluded polytheism, rather than containing it as surpassed When monotheism is taught in the Mysteries it is the type which recognizes plurality as a path leading to it and which, because of this, leaves the plurality to subsist.” This plurality was not conceived simply on the profane level of history. It subsisted even in the theology; for, according to Schelling, the monotheism of the Mysteries was also trinitarian: “[T]he principle content of the Mysteries is assuredly the spiritual God, *one* in his three potencies (once the tension is resolved [*aufgehobener*]) and nonetheless equal to all of these.” The tri-une God of the Mysteries is one whose natural tension (*Spannung*) has been “resolved.” This resolution is due to the collective ability of A^2 and A^3 to subdue B, thus restoring its true essence: its “*An-sich*” ($=A^1$). Schelling takes his example of the one-God-in-three-potencies from the fact that Dionysus was worshiped in three manifestations, each of which was declared to be sovereign over a particular period of time—*e.g.*, the Zagreus of the past, the Bacchus of the present, and the Iakchos of the future.⁸⁴ Whether one cites this aspect of the Dionysian Mysteries or its counterpart in the Eleusinian Mysteries—where Demeter was worshiped as the Persephone of the past, the Demeter of the present, and the Kore of the future—, the end result is still the same, Schelling argues: “the highest teachings of the Mysteries consisted in this: the causal gods were not united simply in an

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 502, 500, 513-18.

indissoluble fashion but were one and the same *God*—we can say, leaving itself [B], through itself [A²], and returning to itself [A³]*—only as different forms, or rather moments, of this One.*" ⁸⁵

Thus far the theology of the Mysteries has been described as monotheistic, trinitarian, and historical. Schelling claims that the specifically historical aspect of this theology can be found in frequent depictions of the God's suffering. The God was known to have progressed historically from the blindness of his unconscious nature to the full clarity of self-consciousness: "As the whole mythological process rests only on the successive overcoming of the blind being of God [*der successiven Ueberwindung des blind seyenden Gottes*], or *a fortiori*, of God as blind being, these sufferings were not the contingent content, but the necessary content of the Mysteries, which could not be anything but the interior, esoteric history of mythology itself." The Mysteries taught the sufferings that God endured in the progression from blindness to self-actualization, and their adherents effectively relived the entire history of mythology in a comparatively brief moment. Schelling sees the concrete basis for their ethical teaching in this focus upon God's suffering. The Mysteries taught that everything "which human life possesses in pain and surpasses only with difficulty, God has also surpassed." Thus, "[w]ho [among the initiates] could still complain about the common accidents in life if he had seen the grand design of all, the inevitable path that God himself had crossed, toward Sovereignty?" ⁸⁶

So much for the retrospective teachings of the Mysteries.

Prospectively, Schelling argues that the Mysteries envisioned a universal religion of the future, one which would reunite all of scattered humanity. This religion was to take its beginning from the present of the Mysteries: "The Greeks [*Hellenen*] themselves did not consider [the

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 463. On the strict similarity between the Dionysian (masculine) and Eleusinian (feminine) trinities, see *ibid.*, 490.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 495, 502-03.

Mysteries] as a religion which would be merely their own. Their content was considered as truly universal, as a world religion [*Weltreligion*]. . . . The gods of the Mysteries were recognized . . . as the *universal* and *highest* causes, and consequently as the content of the supreme and truly universal religion." The orientation toward the future was especially characteristic of the Eleusinian Mysteries. Schelling writes: "[E]ven the name of *Eleusis* designates that which arrives, that which is to come, or, to use the old festive word, the come [*Kunft*], the *advent* of God." The advent of the God in question was that of Kore (A³), or Iakchos (A³) in the Dionysian Mysteries, the third and last forms of Demeter and Dionysus, respectively. In the Dionysian Mysteries, Iakchos was depicted as an infant. According to Schelling, this depiction symbolized the futurity of the truly universal religion. Thus, he calls special attention to a particular characteristic in one of the Dionysian rites.

In the processions of Iakchos, a capital role was given to the *mystical winnowing-box* [*die mystische Wanne*]. . . . It is a known fact that the infant Iakchos was carried in the box, and that Iakchos himself named the box *Λικνίτης*. Thus, the box was the *cradle* [*Wiege*] of God, characterized in this way by the infant. If you ask me why it is a winnowing-box that was chosen as a cradle, I can respond only as follows: By this, Iakchos should be designated as the prince of peace. The box is an image of his pacific works. But by this should also be designated the humble character of his birth, the fact that he had yet to appear as the person whom he would be. And, by an apparently shocking anticipation, but nonetheless from a natural ground, the box is even that which later has become the cradle, in relation to a higher and much holier birth.⁸⁷

These remarks clarify the general approach to the Mysteries that Schelling has been developing. It appears to be Schelling himself who gives a capital role to everything in the Mysteries that looks like nascent Christianity. By the time of the Mysteries, the natural potencies of consciousness have become actualized to the point where humanity will be able to understand Christ as the one God's supreme Revelation in history, when the event finally comes. "The Greek mysteries are effectively the natural transition from paganism to Christianity, *i.e.*, to perfect Revelation."⁸⁸ It is as though the history of mythology has provided consciousness with an *a priori*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 492, 519, 518.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 410.

structure with which to recognize Revelation as such. But no such Revelation comes to the Greeks. At most, their revelation remains imperfect, only a revelation “analogue,” which Schelling also finds in other mythologies.⁸⁹ The mystical cradle of Iakchos was produced only by a “natural” ground. It was not consciously based upon Revelation in the Christian sense of the term.

Schelling summarizes his account of the Mysteries as follows: “The ultimate content of the Mysteries was, in a certain sense, a complete surmounting of polytheism, a perfect liberation in this respect, and therefore a monotheism—in *this* sense above, where we indicated it as *future*. . . . a religion common to all of humanity. The Mysteries could not, to be sure, break through to the true religion itself, but they reached the point where they saw this as that which is to come.”⁹⁰ The Mysteries, in Schelling’s account, attain many of the distinctive features of Christian theology, but only as future possibilities. Even the reality of their exoteric rites was not equivalent to the self-conscious unity of spirit and matter that he finds in Christ. Indeed, perhaps the best way to summarize Schelling’s account of the Incarnation is to say that it is the Mysteries made Real. Otherwise said, Christianity is the Mysteries for the people.⁹¹

d.) Greek Philosophy: Plato and Aristotle

Before they become realized in Christ, however, Schelling notes that the Mysteries enter philosophy through Plato. Thus begins what might be described as a process of demythologization. It is Plato whom Schelling considers to have been the primary link between the mythological self-consciousness of the Mysteries and the drive toward strictly negative philosophy in Aristotle. Schelling describes Plato as the “poet among philosophers.” Plato created the necessary linguistic

⁸⁹ *Philosophie der Mythologie, Werke II,1: 240.*

⁹⁰ *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Werke II,3: 524-5.*

⁹¹ This completes Schelling’s account of the natural development in mythological religions. To review this entire process, see the outline of Schelling’s summary lectures, which I have translated as the Appendix (pp. 355-6).

tools for subsequent philosophy, viz., the “ideas,” the Good beyond being, the myth of the soul, and its passions in dialogical form. Aristotle, in turn, was the grammarian among philosophers. He put the tools to work by setting out to eliminate subjectivity in his first philosophy or theology. In other words, “Aristotle’s metaphysic is a fabric of which the threads belong to Plato.”⁹² To Schelling, Plato and Aristotle represent the limit of the possibilities for ancient philosophy. Strictly speaking, they attain nothing new with respect to the level of consciousness that was attained in the Mysteries, but they bring this level to the conceptual clarity of philosophy. They encounter the active intellect and then fail to show whence it comes and how it is related to God and the world.⁹³ They achieve, in the final analysis, the first complete formulations of a truly negative philosophy. They reach the limits of natural revelation, and point the way beyond themselves to the “higher” type of revelation. That is, their failures reveal to Schelling the need for spirit and matter to be completely reunited in Christ. The requisite separation of the soul and God for Revelation to occur is complete by the time of Plato and Aristotle. But Revelation, in the strict sense of the word, does not occur to them.

In Greek consciousness, the mythological process attains its end and its crisis In mythological religion the primitive relation between consciousness and God was transformed into a real and purely natural relation. On the one hand, it felt like a necessary relation; yet, on the other, it felt provisional, implying the need for a higher relation, destined to replace it and to make it intelligible to itself. Such is the tragic aspect that runs throughout the entire history of paganism. We find already the anticipated sentiment of this exigence, of something to come, of something imminent but not yet recognizable, in certain expressions of Plato, which we can consider seriously, for this reason, as anticipations of Christianity [*Ahndungen des Christenthums*].⁹⁴

Plato prefigures Christian consciousness in “certain expressions.” For example, he writes about the intimate community between God and primordial humanity before the Fall.⁹⁵ He also appears to accept, by drawing explicitly upon the Mysteries, the punishment of the wicked in Hades⁹⁶ and a

⁹² *Philosophie der Mythologie, Werke* II,1: 380f.

⁹³ *Cf., ibid.*, 460f.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, 256.

⁹⁵ *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Werke* II,3: 455ff.; also *Philosophie der Mythologie, Werke* II,1: 463.

⁹⁶ *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Werke* II,3: 493 (*Cf., Plato’s Laws*, 870 d-e).

beatific life among the gods for initiates.⁹⁷ Finally, Schelling thinks that Plato argued in a natural way for the immortality of the soul.⁹⁸

Aristotle adds conceptual clarity to Plato's mythic writings. Schelling is especially surprised to find what he understands to be an account of personal immortality in Aristotle's descriptions of the mind (*νοῦς*). He claims to find this in Aristotle's call, in the *Nicomachean Ethics*, for philosophers to immortalize themselves (*ἀπαθανατίζειν*), by cultivating the theoretical life.⁹⁹ Aristotle's conceptual rationality achieves the perfect end of negative philosophy. It progresses from nature to the singular purity of God beyond the natural world. That which inhibited Aristotle from progressing to a positive philosophy of history, aside from lacking Revelation, was his unwillingness to incorporate the mythic traditions of the past as the ground of his own thinking. Schelling notes that Aristotle was something of a *philomythos*, a lover of myth. But Aristotle's concern for developing a philosophical interpretation of mythic consciousness did not progress. According to Schelling, Aristotle found myths to be of "no use for science." At best, mythic truth was incomplete truth.¹⁰⁰ Even so, in Schelling's account, Aristotle's meager appreciation for myth was enough to touch upon the "analogical succession of principles" in both myth and philosophy.¹⁰¹ This insight was certainly helpful in Schelling's attempt to develop a philosophical understanding of mythology. But one senses that, for Schelling, Aristotle's conceptual aridity amounts to a spiritual regression when compared to the teachings of the Mysteries. Specifically, Aristotle's theology envisioned no future of religious consciousness. And this is what Schelling took to be of primary significance in the Mysteries. In their prophetic appeals to the future universality of religion, the Mystery religions

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 452-3 (Cf., Plato's *Phaedrus*, 69c).

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 493.

⁹⁹ Cf., *Philosophie der Mythologie*, *Werke* II,1: 473-80; also 557ff. Aristotle's discussion of "immortalizing" (*ἀπαθανατίζειν*) is mentioned explicitly at 558 n.5.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 256.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 332.

of Greece played much the same historical role, according to Schelling, as the Jews.

Jewish Revelation: Law and Prophecy, Beginning of “Revealed Religion”

Schelling thinks that the best of the Greeks were, so to speak, lesser Jews—an outer coating, a shell, hiding something else to be revealed in the future of God’s developing nature—, for mythology itself is nothing but “an ideal or idyllic shell [*eine ideale oder idealische Hülle*]. . . .that is drawn alongside this history of nature.”¹⁰² In a similar fashion, the best of the Jews were, so to speak, natural Christians—an outer shell, concealing that which is more substantial for the future of Revelation.

Judaism, properly speaking, was never anything positive. We can only determine it either as a restrained paganism or as a potential, though still hidden Christianity; and it is precisely this middle-position which became the cause of its dispersion. Among the Jews, that which is cosmic, the natural, that which they had in common with other nations, became the shell [*Hülle*] of that which is to come, the supernatural [*Uebernaturlichen*]; but in fact it was for this that Judaism was itself sanctified.¹⁰³

Schelling treats both Judaism and Greek mythology as historical means leading toward the fulfilment of revelation in Christianity. Their historical position qualifies the truth of their religious representations. But the Christians, it seems, benefit from two Old Testaments: one Jewish, the other pagan.

The arrival of Jewish monotheism marks, according to Schelling, the beginning of consciously historical time (*historische Zeit*). The absolutely and relatively prehistorical periods are overcome with the special character of Jewish historical consciousness. Schelling says that the sanctification of the Jews began quite early, in Abraham’s mediated revelation of the “true God.” But its full effects took a great deal of time to unfold. The time between Abraham’s incomplete revelation and its completion in Christ, as Schelling understands it, was marked by the Jews’ frequently unsuccessful struggle to keep themselves free from the gods of other nations. Schelling

¹⁰² *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Werke II,3: 492.*

¹⁰³ *Ibid., Werke II,4: 148-9.*

interprets this struggle as an historical progression of the natural potencies.¹⁰⁴ The Jews experience the same potencies of nature, which led to polytheistic mythologies in other nations. But Schelling claims that a “superior will” uses nature to reveal itself among the Jews, thus yielding a relatively stable form of monotheism.¹⁰⁵ This superior will manifests itself for the first time in the story of Abraham’s potential sacrifice of Isaac. When God is said to have “tempted” Abraham to go and offer his beloved son as a holocaust (*Genesis 22*), Schelling interprets this request as the work of the blind principle of nature (B), the “false God,” here represented as the Elohim. This occurs in the epoch immediately following the first spiritual crisis. Abraham is potentially pagan, as are all of his neighbors, living in the late age of Zabism. But something stops him in the act of carrying out the sacrifice: “[A]t the moment when Abraham lifts his hand to kill his son, the angel of Jehovah calls to him and forbids him from bringing his hand against the child. Here, Elohim and the angel of Jehovah . . . are distinguished . . . That which is named Elohim is the *substance* of consciousness. The angel of Jehovah is nothing substantial, but it is something which can only become in consciousness, can in fact only appear; it is not *substantia*, but is there always only as *actu*.” The true God begins to act upon the consciousness of Abraham, but he does so in a way that recalls the emergence of revelatory consciousness among the pagans: “The true God, in the Old Testament, is also mediated by the false, and is basically tied to the latter. This is the general limit of old-testamental revelation [*der alttestamentlichen Offenbarung*]. Insofar as the higher potency, which is the cause of all revelation, surmounts the principle which is opposed to it, it *produces* in the latter the true God as an appearance [in the substance of consciousness].”¹⁰⁶ It is from this dual consciousness of one God that the Jews take on their middle-position in the history of religions.

¹⁰⁴ Cf. *ibid.*, 129-30.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 131-2.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 123; also 128.

As restrained pagans, the Jews live under the Mosaic Law. The time of the Law corresponds to the Dionysian period (A²) in Greece.¹⁰⁷ Moses is the representative of spiritual order (A²). More specifically, Schelling relates the Law to pagan mythology for two related reasons. First, as Law, it always has the character of restraining something. It thus has more to do with natural necessity than with the essential freedom proper to the divine. That which is restrained is precisely the dark principle of nature or paganism (B): “All of the Mosaic organization, even its religious code, rests uniquely on the recognition of the *reality* of the principle that we have called the contrary principle, the antidivine.” This aspect of Old Testament revelation “presupposes perpetually the tension” caused by this threatening ground of nature.¹⁰⁸ Second, the Mosaic Law does not overcome this principle but simply prescribes directives by which the Jews can live with it. For example, the Jews accept a number of pagan practices—circumcision, dietary laws and sacrifices—, but they do so in accordance with their own directives.¹⁰⁹

As potential Christians, the Jews begin to live under the expectation of being freed from the Law with the advent of the prophets (A³). The promise of future freedom begins to take shape when Amos, Jeremiah, and Isaiah speak against the Mosaic sacrifices in the name of Jehovah.¹¹⁰ The prophets, of course, also prophesy the future Messiah. Their prophecy bears the traces of a tendency that Schelling finds to be characteristic of Old Testament religion in general: the emerging focus on God’s name, YHWH, as “he who will be.”¹¹¹ The particular orientation towards the future in Jewish prophecy leads Schelling to say that “prophetism surpasses the Law; it is to the Law what the Mysteries are to mythology.”¹¹² Even so, like the Greeks, the Jews are said to achieve no more

¹⁰⁷ *Ibid.*, 145.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 124.

¹⁰⁹ *Cf.*, *ibid.*, 132-42.

¹¹⁰ *Cf.*, *ibid.*, 127 (Amos); 128 (Jeremiah); 145 (Isaiah).

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*, 129.

¹¹² *Ibid.*, 145; also 146-7 n.l.

than “mere revelation.” They perceive the spiritual unity and universality of their God, but this revelation does not allow them to conquer their sense of the antidivine ground (=B), which they share with the pagans. Christ is needed for this fundamental overcoming of mythological consciousness, since “in Christ there is no longer mere revelation [*bloße Offenbarung*], but its reality [*Realität*], its effectiveness [*Wirklichkeit*], the thing itself [*die Sache selbst*].”¹¹³ It is Christ’s incarnation, self-sacrificial death, resurrection and ascension that finally conquers death (=B). These events indicate, for Schelling, revelation beyond its mere idea. They amount to Revelation in reality, the potencies restored to harmony in an actual life.

The Greeks and Jews were but historical “shells,” vessels by which two dimensions of history led to Christ, the only real appearance of the mediating potency (A²): “the universal and personal actions of Christ are neatly distinguished [in history]; but in a moment the two are equally known. The sphere of his universal action (which he does not exercise *as* the Christ) is paganism: his personal action is that which he exercises in Revelation, and this is truly why at the same time he is the personal cause of all revelation. There is, in this sense, a double history of the mediating potency: there is, so to speak, a *historia sacra* and a *historia profana* of his action.”¹¹⁴ Profane history is found among the pagans, where the Phoenician Melkart, the Egyptian Osiris, the Indian Shiva, and the Greek Dionysus are all revealed, from the perspective of sacred history, to be but ideal manifestations of what becomes real in Christ.¹¹⁵ The Jews completed their mission when they brought Christ into the world:

It had to be that [the Jews] ceased to be a people, that they became dispersed and scattered among the other nations. They were *something* only as carriers of the future [*die Träger der Zukunft*]. So, as the goal was attained, the medium became aimless [*zweckloses*]. Just as the chaff is dispersed by the wind when the living grain it carries in itself is released, so the Jewish people was dispersed by the wind, having no properly independent history since then; it was, in the strict sense, *excluded* from history [*ausgeschlossen von der Geschichte*].

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 132.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 119.

¹¹⁵ *Cf.*, *ibid.*, 142-3.

Even so, Schelling finds this secondary significance of the Jews to be no cause for anti-Semitism. For “there will certainly come a day when [the Jewish people] will be reintegrated into the divine economy from which it is currently excluded, as though forgotten. *When* this day will come, *this* will appear as the last developments of Christianity itself. . . . In the meantime, it is noble for the most intelligent no longer to refuse the Jews their necessary rights.”¹¹⁶

Christian Revelation: Grace and Freedom, Perfection of “Revealed Religion”

Schelling’s understanding of Christianity, as indicated previously, resembles his understanding of the Greek Mystery religions. He distinguishes both an “interior” or essential aspect of Christianity and an “exterior” one. The “interior” aspect of Christianity is found in the sacred-historical teaching that the spirit of Christ was present in pagan mythologies and Jewish revelation, guiding the order of world history ever since its creation. This is the fundamental teaching of esoteric Christianity. The “exterior” aspect of Christianity concerns the relatively natural development of the three churches: the Petrine (B), Pauline (A²), and Johannine (A³). Schelling understands the time of the Churches to be equivalent to exoteric or dogmatic Christianity; it falls under the dominion of the natural potencies—albeit guided, once again, by a “superior will.” The esoteric aspect of Christianity is most important to Schelling’s historiography. Its teachings offer the key to the higher, internal history, which he has been developing all along. Schelling says that he does not care to harmonize his views on essential Christianity with ecclesiastical orthodoxy. Rather, he seeks to attain orthodoxy *per se*, true opinion in this matter for its own sake: “It is not important for me to be in accord with. . . ecclesiastical doctrine. I have no interest in being orthodox, as we say, and it would not be intolerable for me to be the contrary. Christianity is simply a phenomenon which I seek to *explain*. But that which is the sense, the true intention of Christianity must be judged from its authentic documents, exactly as we have preceded to determine the meaning

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 150, 151.

of Dionysian doctrine or some other mythological idea from the most authentic writings.”

a.) Christ's Incarnation

Schelling says that the incarnation is “the most important and most essential” step in his entire presentation. But he cautions that it must be interpreted with great care, since it leads one into the heart of a great mystery: “that the Son of God should become human appears in general as a *mysterium imperscrutabile*, as an absolutely impenetrable secret. Thus, it would be vain to want to demonstrate the causes: to want to derive some rigorous conclusion in relation to this would already prove to be pure presumption.”¹¹⁷ Despite this warning, Schelling spends a great deal of time trying to develop a detailed account of how the potencies must have changed their relations to one another during the exceptional events of Christ's worldly existence. Schelling begins by rejecting ecclesiastical orthodoxy on the doctrine of the Incarnation. He maintains that the incarnation is not the addition of man and God as separate natures.¹¹⁸ On the contrary, in this view “resides the *πρῶτον ψεῦδος*” of ecclesiastical Christology. It perpetuates the *proton pseudos*, thus falling prey to the central critique in Schelling's identity-philosophy, and it forces one to assume that God's nature suffers change when Christ becomes human.¹¹⁹ In order to avoid these problems, Schelling argues that the change brought about by the incarnation is not substantial, but only formal: “Here, there is not a passage from being purely *God* to being man, but only a passage from being *ἐν μορφῇ θεοῦ* [in the form of God] to being *ἐν μορφῇ δούλου* [in the form of a servant]. . . . It is not the divine nature itself, but only the personality posited as outerdivine-divine [*außergöttlich-göttlich*] who, abandoning his outerdivine *majesty* [*seine außergöttliche Hoheit*], manifests himself as a man.” Otherwise said, “the incarnation is not an other-becoming [*ein anders-Werden*], but only a visible-

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 201, 153.

¹¹⁸ *Cf.*, *ibid.*, 184-5.

¹¹⁹ *Cf.*, *ibid.*, 159-60.

becoming [*ein sichtbar-Werden*]. It is not humanity, as we say habitually, which is the shell [*Hülle*], but the *μορφὴ θεοῦ*, the outerdivine-divine being [*das außergöttlich-göttliche Seyn*] which was the concealment of divinity. . . This being is, in the incarnation, deprived of glory, of divinity, but thereby, it is the *true* glory, the glory of the only begotten Son of the Father which is visible.”¹²⁰

Schelling does not think that Christ is the incarnation of God *per se*.¹²¹ Rather, Christ is the “visible-becoming” of a divine being, namely, the second potency of nature (A²). This is why Schelling can say that Christ’s incarnation is not substantially an “other-becoming”: this potency has always been in the world. In Christ, however, it reveals itself as the mediating potency *par excellence*. How does this occur? Schelling says that the incarnation is primarily the work of the third potency: “It is, in effect, only by *virtue* of the superior potency [A³] that the antecedent potency can *materialize* itself, can be made the stuff or matter of a birth to come.” He argues that one can understand the requisite relational changes among the potencies as follows: “If A² becomes matter, that is=first potency, then A³ becomes=the second, which is to say that the demiurgic function [of the second] passes to the third potency. This is the first formulation, to be sure, of this relatively material, but also relatively immaterial base of the man Jesus. In sum, the man Jesus is brought into the world as all humans, according to the natural course of things.” The course of nature changes, however, at the moment of Christ’s baptism. During this event, “the Spirit is made visible and descends upon [Christ]. This descent of the Spirit at the instant when the Messiah is declared Son of God shows that from this instant the complete divinity is re-established in He who has become man. He is from now on *truly εἰκὼν θεοῦ τοῦ ἀοράτου*, visible image of the invisible God. As the Apostle says, the entire divinity lives in him bodily or completely (this is what the word

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, 163, 165.

¹²¹ *Cf. ibid.*, 164.

σωματικῶς signifies).”¹²² Christ’s “visibility” is extremely important to Schelling. It is what distinguishes Christian Revelation from the “mere revelation” of the Greeks and Jews. Christ is the ideal God of nature become real. The experience of divine “visibility” in Christ is the fact, the historical content, of Revelation *per se*. But even this Revelation of divinity progresses throughout several events in Christ’s worldly existence. It increases in his death, resurrection, and ascension.

b.) Christ’s Death and Resurrection

Schelling understands the resurrection also to have been the work of the third potency. But this potency is strengthened by the decisive change that Christ’s death brings about in the first. The pagans understood that matter, the living principle of death (=B), could be conquered only in an “exterior” way, *e.g.*, by conceiving the idea of an afterlife and writing myths about this possible state of existence. Generally speaking, this insight was gained by virtue of the “natural or *equivalently* cosmic potency” (*i.e.*, A³) under the “lower will” of nature. It was precisely due to its natural status that it was unable to conquer death “at its *root*,” and this is what is required for “an interior reconciliation, a reconciliation *with God*.” This is the reconciliation that Christ’s death and the Spirit’s resurrection of the Son bring about. The key to this transformation of death, Schelling supposes, is to be found in a particular characteristic of the mediating potency once it has become Christ: “the will toward total submission to God.” To be submissive to God, “this signifies precisely only to be submissive to this principle of divine malevolence [=B]. . . .[T]his principle *was* the cause of death. It is precisely in the necessity of death that all of its power and force [*Macht und Gewalt*] is manifested.”¹²³ If the mediating potency wanted to submit completely to “the malevolence of God (to take this upon himself), it had to submit until the *death*. *Without* this, the submission would not have been perfect; it would have been only a submission with reserve. It is only by advancing *until*

¹²² *Ibid.*, 84 (Cf., *Colossians* 1:15; 2:9).

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 194, 202.

death, that *all* resistance was annulled [*aufgehoben*].”¹²⁴

The first potency subsists only by excluding the being of the second: “this principle *is* the malevolent divinity only and in the measure where it excludes the mediating potency. If, therefore, this exclusion is rendered *impossible*, then its force as principle of malevolence [*als Princip des Unwillens*] is deprived and annulled.” Schelling thinks that Christ’s acceptance of death was completely free. This particular characteristic of Christ’s death is what causes the first potency to become completely actual and, at the same time, completely impotent. Death is thereby overcome in principle. This allows Christ effectively to “cover” or protect humanity from death, henceforth, so that “the Father [=B] no longer sees humanity” when believers “put on” Christ, “but only Christ his Son.”¹²⁵ Once the mediating potency (A²) has completely surrendered its life, thus reducing B to impotence, only the supreme spirit (A³) is left with the potency to bring life out of death in Christ’s Resurrection.

Schelling says that the resurrection was, in effect, an intensification of the incarnation. The Holy Spirit also dominates in this event. Christ’s natural body is changed, by virtue of the superior potency (A³), into a spiritual body. Only at this point does Christ become perfectly human: “the *man*, Christ, is *for himself alone* equal to the divine in its *entirety*. It is in this which is found, at the same time, primordial man restored with even more brilliance.” Schelling admits that one cannot find an experiential “analogue” for the body of the resurrected Christ and, consequently, that his account of the resurrection cannot be made completely intelligible.¹²⁶

This is an important admission. Clearly, he does not think that perfection is attainable in this life. To this end, he explicitly rejects in what seems to be an allusion to Hegel and Feuerbach,

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 202-03.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 203, 205.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 218-19, 220.

all thinkers who attempt to understand themselves as God's equals in this life.¹²⁷ But the sobriety in this admission also comes with a price. By accepting the resurrection as an historical fact, as he must in order to defend the historical superiority of Christianity to paganism and Judaism, Schelling leaves behind the universal order of experience and focuses on the vicarious experiences of others. This means, according to his own understanding of philosophy, that the cornerstone of his "philosophy" of revelation is not based on experience—"mystical empiricism" notwithstanding. If Schelling were to argue that the resurrection was experienced concretely by some, then he would need to explain the exceptional significance of this extraordinary experience of the divine—beyond, for example, the theophanies ascribed to Roman emperors, Egyptian Pharaohs, Indian saints, and so on. In brief, Schelling would have to explain why the resurrection of Christ can become the vicarious experience for his philosophy of revelation. Since Schelling does not attempt to defend the universal significance of Christ's uniqueness, he loses the basis for his understanding of world history as a progression toward Christ as the measure of its order. He does not address the problem that the experiences interpreted by his positive philosophy of history have become relatively idiosyncratic. Instead, he continues to develop his account of the historical meaning of Christianity.

c.) Christ's Ascension

Among the great events in the life of Christ, there is one about which we have said nothing: his becoming-invisible [*das Unsichtbarwerden Christi*], his elevation from the earth after the Resurrection, that which we call his *Ascension to Heaven* [*Himmelfahrt*]. We should, therefore, explain ourselves equally on this point. This we could equally do, but we cannot presuppose the required notions to this end, nor begin to develop them here. It would be necessary, *e.g.*, to treat and analyze here the matter of that which we call infinite space, in the same way that we formerly treated, and presented in an entirely new light, the doctrine of infinite time.

After this promising beginning, Schelling chooses not to undertake this analysis, precisely at the place in his *Philosophy of Revelation* where it is needed most. And neither does he address

¹²⁷ Cf., *ibid.*, 164-5.

it anywhere else. Instead, he leaves his readers with the impression that they need to keep in mind their perspectival view of space in order to understand Christ's "ascension." He writes:

If, for example, in a particular point of the universe space has become a necessary form of existence, and therefore equally a necessary form of intuition, it is *from this point*, and therefore *relatively* that all the system of the world would appear [to be] in space; but it does not follow that all would be *effectively* in space, and could not the distances which appear to us to be spatial not also be explained from simple relations and different ideas? If it is man who posited and does not cease to posit the outer-divine [*außergöttliche*], and thus the spatial world, one must guard oneself from thinking that this action could be understood otherwise than *relatively* beyond the system [of the world] with which *he* is in connection.¹²⁸

Schelling says that these clues must suffice about the ascension for the "intelligent auditors [*intelligente Zuhörer*]" of his lectures upon whom he counts.¹²⁹ In other words, he leaves his audience to surmise what he wishes to communicate.

Here is a possible interpretation of what he has provided. In the "ascension," Christ only appeared to ascend into the heavens, *i.e.*, from the outer-divine-positing perspective of fallen humanity. In fact, what happened was this: Forty days after the resurrection, Christ became "invisible," that is to say, he died. Yet he continued to live as the Holy Spirit, and later descended as such "from above." The "ascension" of Christ thus causes the beginning of the Church and the *caput mortuum* of paganism.¹³⁰ It was necessary for Christ (A²) to depart, so that that which is superior, the Holy Spirit (A³), could become further actualized. This claim corresponds to the "law" that Schelling says has been guiding his reflections all along: "the anterior must *leave*, *i.e.*, give up its place, in order that the ulterior may *come*." Christ must continue to live as the Holy Spirit until such time when all of nature will be transfigured into Christ's "spiritual body." It is only at this time that true immortality will be actual; for true immortality is this: "that man, who is internally a purely spiritual being, also becomes as such *externally*." True immortality is when "the body assumes the

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 235.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 236.

¹³⁰ *Cf.*, *ibid.*, 239.

nature of a spiritual body, of a σώματος πνευματικῶν.” Schelling says explicitly that “faith” is required to accept this future transfiguration of humanity in general, of which the incarnation-resurrection was only a part.¹³¹

Faith: Teleological and Hypothetical

In one sense, it would seem that faith is “the substance of things hoped for and the proof of things unseen” (Heb. 11:1). This is his distinctively Christian acceptance of faith: trust in the future perfection of humanity—intimated by Schelling with the eschatological index of “philosophical religion”—, the “first fruits” of which have been revealed in Christ’s resurrection. This aspect of faith may be called his *teleological* faith. But Schelling continues his discussion. He does not wish to rest in a teleological faith that lacks content. He also grants that a certain type of “faith” is required at the beginning of philosophical investigations. This faith is the trust in hypotheses which may lead to the desired “Sabbath rest” of teleological faith. Without the basic trust that something worth knowing can be found, Schelling contends, one would never even begin philosophical inquiries in the first place.¹³² Thus, one may speak of Schelling’s *hypothetical* faith. This marks his acceptance of a properly philosophical type of “faith.” Finally, it is the movement from hypothetical degrees to teleological perfection which gives faith its true content.¹³³ Schelling gives no indication that this movement can be completed within this life. Indeed, since the divine author of history has not brought about the *telos* of humanity under “philosophical religion,” Schelling expects that philosophical work leading toward this “Sabbath rest” will afford no more than brief periods of rest in this life, as the past becomes increasingly known through historiographic studies. He is understandably dissatisfied with scholars who appeal to faith too quickly, in order to “explain”

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 236-7, 221.

¹³² *Cf.*, *ibid.*, 15-6.

¹³³ *Cf.*, *ibid.*, 13-4.

matters that they would rather not think about in earnest. Schelling usually attempts to think first and believe later. His cursory discussion of the ascension, however, is an important exception to this rule.¹³⁴

It is relatively clear why Schelling seems to have avoided serious discussion of the ascension. Elsewhere, he acknowledges that “in more than one instance” he finds New Testament evangelists “naïvely transcribing” events of which they do not understand the full context: “Their comportment, equivalent partially to mythological consciousness, expresses also that which escapes their understanding. It is in *this* sense that we must conserve, in principle, the concept of inspiration.”¹³⁵ The ascension seems to be one of these instances. According to Schelling’s historiography, “inspiration” was the proper mode of religious representation during the time of earliest Zabism. Thus, when the evangelists describe Christ’s ascension to the heavens, they seem to be sending him back to the Sky-god of early Zabism. This practice amounts to another historical regression in consciousness and symbolization—this time within Schelling’s paradigmatic

¹³⁴ Schelling’s Christocentric thinking has been the cause of some apparent embarrassment, even among his most sympathetic interpreters. Although vital to Schelling’s own understanding of his positive philosophy, his christology is politely ignored by Andrew Bowie. He insists that “the best arguments” of the positive philosophy “stand without theology,” which is why Bowie’s reading of Schelling considers “only certain aspects of the later philosophy in detail” (Cf., Bowie, *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy*, *op. cit.*, 129). Of course, Schelling would disagree. The positive philosophy is historical philosophy, and this requires especially the unique difference of Christ’s Revelation in order for history to be intelligible as a progression of divine revelations. In a manner that is more faithful to Schelling’s project, one scholar has recently attempted to interpret the christological core of the positive philosophy as positive *philosophy*. See Christian Danz, *Die philosophische Christologie F.W.J. Schellings*, in *Schellingiana*, vol. IX (Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: frommann-holzboog, 1996). Danz’s work may be consulted for a more sustained discussion of the topics I have only been able to touch upon here. The central liability in his work, however, is that Danz neglects to address Schelling’s difficulty with the doctrine of the Ascension. His account of Schelling’s christology ends with the resurrection. Paul Tillich briefly mentions Christ’s “exaltation” in his books on Schelling’s philosophy. But he does so in such a way that Schelling’s understanding of this doctrine appears to have been simply orthodox. See Tillich, *Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness in Schelling’s Philosophical Development*, Victor Nuovo, trans., (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1974), 125; and *The Construction of the History of Religion in Schelling’s Positive Philosophy*, Victor Nuovo, trans., (Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1974), 155. Clearly, there is more to Schelling’s gloss on the ascension than a repetition of ecclesiastical orthodoxy.

¹³⁵ *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Werke* II,4: 177.

tradition—for which he does not provide an account.

These interpretive points with respect to the ascension are consistent with the logic of Schelling's *Potenzenlehre*. But he does not state them explicitly. Instead, he suspends all discussion of the ascension and continues his presentation by developing a history of the church. He argues that the church falls prey to the power of the natural potencies, even though Christ had already allegedly overcome them.¹³⁶ This claim marks a significant change in Schelling's historiography, one for which he offers no explanation. What the spirit was able to accomplish in one man, Christ, now takes a great deal of time to manifest in the rest of human consciousness. The church begins a long "external" history, which was considered in the introduction to this section on Schelling's historiography and in Voegelin's interpretation of his eschatology. The history of the church, according to Schelling, will eventually lead beyond itself to the time of "philosophical religion," when God will finally be known to be "all in all." Schelling states clearly that this time has not yet come; philosophical religion "does not exist."¹³⁷ The highest development of consciousness to date is that which can be found in cultures formed by the "interior" history of essential Christianity. Philosophical religion, Schelling implies, will spring from a culture such as his own.

Summary of Schelling's Historiography

These remarks complete my survey of Schelling's historiography. To summarize my account: Schelling's historical philosophy discusses the discernable order of history to progress through three types of religion. The first type of religion is "mythological religion." It has an absolutely pre-historical (*vorgeschichtliche*) beginning. This is the religion of God's blind "nature" *par excellence*. At its beginning, it is the religion of unconscious immediacy, where no consciousness of the difference between a material deity and the "one true God" of the spirit is said

¹³⁶ Cf. *ibid.*, 295-6.

¹³⁷ *Philosophie der Mythologie, Werke* II,1: 250; *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Werke* II,4: 333.

to exist. Given the dynamic character of nature, however, this phase is said to have an internal progression of its own. It moves from the experience of nature's material order (B) to a relatively spiritual experience of its freedom (A³), as symbols for the *dramatis personae* who rule in various world mythologies become represented increasingly as spiritual gods. Once Schelling finds the mythologies of Egypt, India and Greece to have developed symbols for all the natural potencies (B, A², A³), he says that the relatively prehistoric (*vorhistorische*) period has been reached. This progression leads mythological religion to an incomplete form of the next religion, the "revealed religion" of the Jews. This stage is, properly speaking, the beginning of consciously historical time (*historische Zeit*), though particularly among the Jews. But Jewish revelation is incomplete. Early Judaism is said to be plagued with mythic and pagan elements. The revelatory consciousness of the "one true God" beyond nature does not come all at once. Jewish religion must also progress. It does so by moving from the relatively spiritual necessity of the Mosaic Law (B) to the relative freedom from the law proclaimed by the prophets (A³). The prophets prophesy the completion of revealed religion only in the future Messiah, whom Schelling takes to be a personal figure. It is only with Jesus Christ, Schelling argues, that the natural necessity of mythological religion—and its increasingly spiritual counterparts in the Mosaic Law and Prophets—comes to its end.

The incarnation of Christ marks the *telos*, the end toward which the mythological process and the "mere revelation" of the Jews was headed. At the birth of Christianity, consciousness is elevated to the freedom of a relatively complete historical perspective, although only in Christ and his followers. From the conscious perspective of history, the "truths" of the past appear to have been established on merely "natural" grounds. Christ's free unification of God's immanent nature (the Mosaic Law) and transcendent essence (the prophetic freedom from the Law) reveals the perfection of humanity to come. Christianity is also historicized by Schelling. It simply opens the way to the true religion of freedom, when all will be like Christ. Thus, Christianity must also go through an

historical progression, much like the natural development of other religions.¹³⁸ It does so by progressing from the legalistic orientation of Petrine Christianity (early Catholicism, dominated by a spiritually elevated B) to the orientation toward grace in the Pauline Christianity of the Reformation (A²).¹³⁹

This is the age in which Schelling found himself to be living, an age that is suffering extreme birth pangs for the culmination of history. At this point, it is realized that the former types of Christianity offered, so to speak, better news than any of the preceding traditions. But the good news is truly yet to come. The last phase of Christianity, the Johannine (A³), is indistinguishable from the third and last type of religion, *viz.*, "philosophical religion." Schelling's appeal to this phase of religion is an eschatological index. He even wonders whether it is properly called a type of Christianity at all. It does not occur, strictly speaking, within history. Rather, it describes the "absolute monotheism," the absolute identity of the real and the ideal, which can come about, he supposes, only when God brings history to an end. In the projected stage of "philosophical religion," human consciousness of the divine will be immediate. It will no longer require discursive reasoning, historical consciousness and the like, to bring it to relative immediacy. Everyone will immediately know God to be "all in all."¹⁴⁰ Unlike Hegel, Schelling does not leave his interpreters to wonder whether or not he thinks history has come to its end within his own philosophical reflections. He declares bluntly that philosophical religion "does not exist," for God is not yet known to be "all in all." At most, Schelling seems to think of himself as a philosophical prophet, one who sees what the "promised land" will entail but has not been given the way to enter it. The order of consciousness cannot be changed by human fiat. Historical changes are initiated and completed by the divine.

¹³⁸ Cf., *ibid.*, II,1: 258-9.

¹³⁹ Cf., *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Werke* II,4: 313-23.

¹⁴⁰ Cf., *ibid.*, II,4: 324-33.

In contrast to Hegel's negative dialectic of annulment (*Aufhebungsdialektik*)—where a thesis is posited, negated by its antithesis, and finally overcome by their synthesis—, Schelling's positive dialectic of generation (*Erzeugungsdialektik*) attempts to have a thesis come to be only by virtue of its antithesis (B). This beginning is intelligible only when one focuses on the existential, rather than the formal priority of the antithesis.¹⁴¹ Rather than "positing" his beginning, Schelling hypothesizes that the divine *Prius* establishes itself in the objectivity of historical experience and symbolization. Thus, mythological religion is the unconscious or blind antithesis (B) of history, the religion in which the angry or jealous "Father" God is eventually dominant; revealed religion is the relatively conscious thesis of history (A²), the religion in which the "Son" is eventually dominant; philosophical religion will be the fully conscious synthesis of material nature and historical spirit (A³), the religion of the "Spirit," the end of history and an effective recreation of the world.¹⁴² This is, in general, how the dialectic of the *Potenzenlehre* is said to reveal itself within and beyond the economy of world history.

Within the present order of consciousness, all attempts to conflate either the real or the ideal into one or the other do not amount to what Schelling means by "philosophical religion." When vulgar materialists attempt to explain the ideal simply as an epiphenomenon of the real, they regress to a natural or mythological state of consciousness, usually unawares. They pretend as though divine transcendence was never experienced or symbolized in history. This type of historical regression is still possible because "God's nature" (matter) continues to appear as though it exists independently from "God's transcendent essence." Similarly, when idealists attempt to explain matter simply as a false appearance of the ideal, their thinking tends to become lost in the mystical

¹⁴¹ For discussion of Schelling's *Erzeugungsdialektik*, see Beach, *op. cit.*, 111-29, 136-47.

¹⁴² On Schelling's equation of the potencies with the persons of the Christian trinity, *vis-à-vis* creation, see *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Werke* II,3: 340ff. On their historical significance, see *supra*, 227 n. 75.

aspects of revealed religion, and the natural world becomes an illusion. This type of historical regression is still possible because God's transcendent essence continues to appear as though it is substantially different than God's immanent nature. Schelling rejects both materialist and idealist "solutions" to the paradox of consciousness in history.¹⁴³ The elevation of historical consciousness, for Schelling, amounts to the reconciliation between God's immanent nature and transcendent essence broken by the Fall, or the gradual realization that nature's essential freedom is eternal.

CONCLUSION

Schelling's historical philosophy attempts to account for the evolution of divine and human consciousness within a substantially permanent order of reality. He acknowledges no substantial changes in human nature or the divine in his entire elaboration of this history. When the potencies of "God's nature" become relatively actual at different times in history, nothing changes in the substance of the All, according to Schelling. He discusses only formal changes that occur in consciousness, when the potencies become principles of material and spiritual order. No substantial change in human nature occurs, for example, in the transition from mythological to Revelatory experiences of the world's order. Schelling grants that the same potencies of nature must be presupposed as the constituents of the humanity that undergoes both types of experience. The

¹⁴³ Schelling would have been displeased with the later attempts, among others, of Engels and Kierkegaard, both of whom were once his students, to understand the history of reality in predominantly material or spiritual terms. Walter Schulz has argued that it was precisely in the perceived failure of Schelling to articulate a coherent positive philosophy that Kierkegaard, Marx, Schopenhauer and Nietzsche were led to take radically different philosophical stances on the substance of history/reality. Once Schelling's prioritization of the irrational destroyed German idealism, or so it seemed, it left nothing of a persuasive solution to fill the void it created. See Schulz *Die Vollendung des deutschen Idealismus in der Spätphilosophie Schellings*. 2nd ed. (Pfullingen: Neske, 1975 [c. 1955]). In contrast to more conventional interpreters, Schulz argues that Schelling's *Spätphilosophie* forms a consistent whole. Far from destroying German idealism, it provides the historical ground by which it is supported, albeit in the provisional light of history. Thus, Schulz finds it possible to emphasize the negative or quasi-rational achievements of Schelling's later thought. Schulz's attempt to rejoin Schelling's *disjecta membra* resembles Voegelin's. However, Voegelin emphasizes the positive-historical aspect of Schelling's thought, rather than its ability to support neo-Kantian rationalism.

potencies simply manifest different patterns of actualization in history, thus yielding different accents on nature or its beyond as the true source of order in the discernable epochs of revelation.¹⁴⁴ “Mere revelation” is found among the esoteric Greeks and prophetic Jews, even before Christ becomes “visible” as the “real” principle of the “mediating potency.” Thus, Schelling’s work effectively begins to weaken the ecclesiastical distinction between natural reason and divine revelation. For Schelling, the order of history is a progression in consciousness from natural revelation to supernatural revelation. The study of history is, therefore, an inherently theological matter. The distinction between reason and revelation is not explicitly overcome in Schelling’s philosophy, but it is weakened nonetheless. Finally, Schelling’s *Potenzenlehre* provides an initial basis for understanding a broad range of religious experiences as symbolic equivalents for one another. But he encounters considerable difficulties in his attempt to demonstrate the universal progression of human consciousness throughout history. The fundamental problem with Schelling’s method has been summarized well by Beach:

Schelling wants to present his empirical studies as separately grounded and significantly corroborative of his abstract theoretical system. In the actual practice of his “historical-critical method,” however, Schelling tends to treat the phenomena of religion more like ciphers to be decoded in terms of a pre-established schema than like fresh data to be analyzed by strictly empirical methods. Modern [*i.e.*, contemporary] readers of his work often have the impression that he is trying to mold the material to fit a procrustean bed of aprioristic ideas, instead of proceeding by framing new hypotheses to fit the facts.¹⁴⁵

This difficulty was also sensed by Voegelin. It accounts for why Schelling’s achievement is said to have been “marred” by an “inclination to intellectualize the unconscious and to reduce its movements to the formula of a dialectical process” (*OH* III:193). Indeed, in his attempt to see the potencies of nature manifest themselves in an historical succession of world mythologies, Schelling does struggle with some traditions more than others. The *Potenzenlehre* is supposed to account for

¹⁴⁴ Cf., *Philosophie der Mythologie*, *Werke* II,2: 315.

¹⁴⁵ Beach, *op. cit.*, 150.

historical change and constancy within God's nature, of which human nature is a part. As such, when God's nature develops, in the transformation from potencies to actual principles, all world mythologies should be effected in exactly the same way. However, Schelling's historical data do not support this hypothesis conclusively. Stagnations and regressions between cultures, decisive problems with the historical dimension of the *Potenzenlehre*, were found in Persian, Indian and Buddhist religion, the Evangelists' symbolization of Christ's ascension, and the complete enigma of "Chinese atheism."

In order to articulate a thoroughly empirical philosophy of history, it appears that Schelling's historiography needs to be redone.

CHAPTER FIVE

VOEGELIN'S HISTORIOGRAPHIES

"The origin of things is the Apeiron [Unlimited]....
It is necessary for things to perish
into that from which they were born;
for they pay one another penalty
for their injustice
according to the ordinance of Time."
— Anaximander (frag. A9; B1)

Voegelin attempted to rework Schelling's philosophical history of mythology and revelation. He did so in two discernable stages. First, from *The New Science of Politics* (1952) to *Order and History III* (1957), Voegelin attempts yet another reworking of the *historia sacra* tradition, arguing that the world-transcendent God described in Christian theology providentially determines human experiences of the divine in a progressive series of revelations. This aspect of Voegelin's historical thought is what I shall call his *differentiated* historiography. This term describes the period when Voegelin develops the "inner" history of the "differentiation" of consciousness as its pattern and problems were left behind by Schelling. With respect to its problems, Voegelin knows in advance that it will not be possible for him to develop a natural history of spiritual progress; for Schelling's historiography has revealed, despite its contrary intentions, that human consciousness in the Orient as well as in some Occidental cultures simply has not developed with universal conformity. Thus, Voegelin abandons the notion in Schelling's project that changes in the ground of being marking the epochs of history are experienced simultaneously by humanity in general. In light of this problem, he turns to reformulate the main pattern of Schelling's work as an exclusively Western phenomenon. He argues that the developing stages of spiritual consciousness in the West constitute "representative" truth for all of humanity, due to the emergence of universal thinking in Western philosophy and revelatory religion. Voegelin contends that the philosophical study of order in sacred history may reveal the meaningful order of history. This contention is formulated in the

programmatic statement by which *Order and History* is introduced: "The order of history emerges from the history of order" (*OHI*: ix). In other words, the order of history has a discernable *eidos* or essence, the meaning of which can be found by studying the emergence of meaning in history. This study is the proper task of the philosophical historian. For Voegelin, as with Schelling, the essence of history is found to be progressive or "adventitious" until Christ, always with respect to the initiating activity of the "divine ground" in human consciousness. In this period of Voegelin's historiography, the essence of history is said to be a "process" in consciousness, which progresses from "compact" to "differentiated" experiences and symbolizations of the divine—from societies in the ancient Near East to Jewish and Christian revelation, respectively. After Christ, human consciousness either recedes from the "maximal" truth of Christian revelation, through the growth of "gnosticism," or retains the "acme" of truth in Christ and early Christianity. Thus, in the period of his *differentiated* historiography, Voegelin uses the level of historical consciousness attained by Christian theologians as a measure to classify, as subordinate, the levels of consciousness attained during the times of cosmological myth, classical philosophy, and Jewish revelation. His initial historiography thus supports what are sometimes thought to be fundamental differences between societies ordered by myth, reason, or revelation—where this triad represents an ascending scale of intellectual clarity with respect to the human condition.

In the period from *Anamnesis* (1966) to *Order and History V* (1987), Voegelin realizes that he must modify his former historiography. The change in his program is brought about by an important discovery. He realizes that the classic philosophers of ancient Greece—especially Plato and Aristotle—understood reason (*noesis*) to be constituted by experiences of divine revelation. Due to this discovery, Voegelin begins to argue that the order of consciousness does not change historically as a progression from human reason to divine revelation. The common distinction between "natural reason" and "divine revelation," used by many post-classical theologians and

philosophers alike, is found to be an untenable convention, even a “conceit” formulated by church Fathers seeking to gain a monopoly on the concept of revelation. Accordingly, Voegelin begins to emphasize the experiential “equivalence” of reason and revelation in history. I refer to this period of his historical thought as his *equivalent* historiography.

I have introduced these technical terms in order to account for an accentual change in Voegelin’s historical thinking. They adequately reflect Voegelin’s own account of how his understanding of order in history appears to change over the course of his mature works (*Cf.*, *OH* IV: 1-20). In fact, however, the change that Voegelin announces in his program changes nothing significant in his historiography. Remarkably, his discovery of “equivalent” experiences of revelation in pre-Christian and otherwise “pagan” societies—occasionally extending back as far as Hesiod—is not enough to alter his former conception of history as a meaningful progression toward Christ. The “equivalent” experiences of revelation were not simply equal, he maintains. The revelatory equivalents of classical philosophy and Christian theology advance on a scale from compact to differentiated levels of truth, respectively. Hence, the initial progression in Voegelin’s differentiated historiography—from myth, to philosophy, to revelation—is simply replaced by the progression from “noetic” (Greek) to “pneumatic” (Christian) types of revelation. Even in his final analyses, Voegelin’s historiography continues to turn, as it did with Schelling, on the revelation of Christ’s incarnation and resurrection as the eschatological measure of existential truth in history. Thus, despite possible protests to the contrary, all of which will be analyzed in context, I shall argue that Voegelin’s mature historiography remains that of a developmental historicist in the Schellingian style. His later search for order *in* history retains the characteristic traces of his former attempt to understand the order *of* history.¹

¹ These points are not generally acknowledged in Voegelin scholarship. Many scholars tend to accept Voegelin’s claim that his historiography changes significantly, beginning in *Order and History* IV. For

My thesis will be supported by a critical analysis of Voegelin's historical thinking, one that does not confuse terminological changes with substantial ones.² My central concern is not to provide an exhaustive commentary on Voegelin's historiographic works, for such would require more analysis than the space restrictions of this chapter allow. But it will be possible to discuss their salient points with respect to Voegelin's adoption and transformation of distinctively Schellingian themes in his own work. These points will be brought to light in their appropriate contexts. In order to avoid becoming lost in the voluminous details of Voegelin's work, I shall focus my discussion on his life-long attempt to understand the experiential dynamics of reason and revelation in history. By following the actual change in his understanding of reason and revelation, the thesis of this chapter will be clarified and defended: Voegelin's mature historiography remains that of a developmental historicist in the Schellingian style.

1. THE DIFFERENTIATED HISTORIOGRAPHY: DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORY

Voegelin's differentiated historiography is introduced by *The New Science of Politics*. The opening lines state that human existence in political society "is historical existence." This means that "a theory of politics, if it penetrates to principles, must at the same time be a theory of history." The importance of historical knowledge in political affairs is announced from the start. Voegelin's *New*

representative examples, see Glenn Hughes, "Eric Voegelin's View of History as a Drama of Transfiguration," in *International Philosophical Quarterly* 30/4 (December, 1990): 449-64; and Jürgen Gebhardt, "Toward the Process of Universal Mankind: The Formation of Voegelin's Philosophy of History," in *Eric Voegelin's Thought: A Critical Appraisal*, Ellis Sandoz, ed., (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1982), 67-86. Like Voegelin himself, both Hughes and Gebhardt begin by noting that, strictly speaking, Voegelin does not have an abstract "philosophy of history," but they conclude by reproducing Voegelin's abstract account of the order of history. John Ranieri is one of few interpreters to notice that Voegelin's historiography does not change significantly in his latest work, but he does not discuss this point in any detail. See Ranieri, *Eric Voegelin and the Good Society*, *op. cit.*, 215, 236.

² John Ranieri has begun such an interpretation in his recent book *Eric Voegelin and the Good Society*. Ranieri acknowledges that no substantial change is to be found between Voegelin's early and later historiographies (233, 236), but then Ranieri pursues a different line of inquiry. His work is not primarily concerned with interpreting Voegelin's philosophy of history.

Science is written, according to the dictum of Richard Hooker in its epigraph, so that “[p]osterity may know we have not loosely through silence permitted things to pass away as in a dream.” This quote signals more than the basic point that good lessons in politics ought not to be forgotten, especially in light of the fact that Voegelin writes shortly after World War II. It suggests that Voegelin will attempt to use the historical principles underlying his politics in order to defy Anaximander’s claim that all things must pass away, “according to the ordinance of Time.”

This point is not immediately obvious. After all, in the concluding chapter of the *New Science*, Voegelin agrees with the author of *Ecclesiastes* when he declares (1) that all things have “a time to be born and a time to die,” and (2) that the deeds of God “from the beginning to the end” cannot be fathomed by the human mind (*Eccles.* 3:2, 11). Voegelin writes: “What comes into being will have an end, and the mystery of this stream of being is impenetrable. These are the two great principles governing existence” (*NSP*, 166, 167).³ Is this realistic thinking not in agreement with Anaximander’s dictum? Perhaps the author of *Ecclesiastes* would agree that it is, but it is not strictly an equivalent statement for Voegelin. Notice that Voegelin writes of these principles as governing “existence.” This term indicates that what comes into being will have an existential end. But what of its substantial end? Do all personal human traits pass away after all, both existentially and substantially? Likely not, according to Voegelin. He will argue that spiritual consciousness has developed in history to the point where expectations of depersonalization after death reveal such thinking to be determined by the compact or “cosmological” order of being. In more conventional language, Anaximander and the Kohelet lived before the historical revelation of personal immortality in Christ’s resurrection. It was natural for them to think that life ends in

³ This is one of Voegelin’s clearest statements on the mystery of being. For discussion see Glenn Hughes, *Mystery and Myth in the Philosophy of Eric Voegelin* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1993). Hughes emphasizes the sobriety in Voegelin’s discussion of the “elemental mysteries” of human life, thus eliminating some of the mystification caused by Voegelin’s technical language.

depersonalization. But Voegelin lives in the era of Christ. Thus, if he were to accept the thinking of pre-Christian realists without qualification, his thinking would be anachronistic. To avoid this problem, Voegelin attempts to preserve the level of consciousness gained in Christianity, arguing that it constitutes a philosophically defensible advance in the history of experience and symbolization. He understands historiographic work to be an immortalizing quest for God, whether the historiographer knows it or not. The divine is the first and last cause of history's order and the conscious emergence of this order in the soul of the historian. The proper task of the philosophical historian is to preserve the line of meaning in history that leads from and back to God.

Voegelin's differentiated historiography is potentially confusing, since it equivocates on whether or not a discernable order *of* history can be found. On the one hand, Voegelin explicitly criticizes progressive historicism. He states bluntly that history has no "eidos," no essential meaning or knowable form. There is no general meaning *of* history, he claims. There is only meaning *in* history. "The problem of an eidos in history. . . arises only when Christian transcendental fulfilment becomes immanentized," when secular progressivists grow tired of waiting for the Second Coming of Christ or the transcendental perfection of their humanity only after death. "The course of history as a whole is no object of experience; history has no eidos, because the course of history extends into the unknown future. The meaning of history, thus, is an illusion; and this illusory eidos is created by treating a symbol of faith as if it were a proposition concerning an object of immanent experience" (*NSP*, 120). On the other hand, Voegelin does claim to know something about the *eidos* of history. He writes that "the substance of history consists in the experiences in which man gains the understanding of his humanity and together with it the understanding of its limits." He even says that this "gain" is progressive. It advances through three types of truth in history: "The first of these types is the truth represented by the early empires [*viz.*, the Egyptian, Babylonian, Assyrian, Persian and Chinese]; 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’.... The third type of truth that appears with Christianity shall be called ‘soteriological truth’” (*Ibid.*, 78, 76-7).⁴ The specific differences between these types of truth will be discussed in the sections that follow. For now it is sufficient to note that Voegelin has suggested a three-fold account of history’s order, *i.e.*, an order *of* history, rather than simply an account of various types of order *in* history. Voegelin claims that the differentiated order of history is a meaningful progression from cosmological (pagan) to soteriological (Christian) types of truth. This point recalls Schelling’s account of the three-fold progression of religions. But how is one to account for this apparent contradiction in Voegelin’s work? “History,” it seems, is both meaningful and meaningless, progressive and static, ordered and chaotic. Voegelin reveals the presupposition that allows him to speak of history in this ambiguous way. He accepts the division of historiography into “sacred” and “profane” dimensions.

Sacred and Profane Historiographies: Voegelin’s Historical Survey

Voegelin takes the distinction between sacred and profane historiographies from St. Augustine and Karl Löwith’s twentieth-century reinterpretation of the Christian symbolism.⁵ Augustine, it seems, found the key to the meaning of history:

History no longer moved in cycles, as it did with Plato and Aristotle, but acquired direction and destination. Beyond Jewish messianism in the strict sense the specifically Christian conception of history had, then, advanced toward the understanding of the end as a transcendental fulfilment. In his elaboration of this theoretical insight St. Augustine distinguished between a profane sphere of history in which empires rise and fall and a sacred history which culminates in the appearance of Christ and the establishment of the church. . . .Only transcendental [sacred] history, including the earthly pilgrimage of the church, has

⁴ This triad is reproduced in the first volume of *Order and History* (*OH* I: 56). Though this volume was the first to be published, it was the last to be written—*i.e.*, after volumes II and III. See Ellis Sandoz, “Voegelin’s Philosophy of History and Human Affairs.” Paper presented at the Annual Meeting, American Political Science Association, San Francisco, Ca., August 31, 1996. This point alone suggests the legitimacy of using these categories to interpret the developmental historiography as a progressive account of truth.

⁵ Voegelin refers to Löwith’s *Meaning in History* (Chicago, 1949) for the philosopher’s distinction between the unknowable order *of* history and the knowable experiences of order *in* history.

direction toward its eschatological fulfilment. Profane [immanent] history, on the other hand, has no such direction; it is a waiting for the end; its present mode of being is that of a *saeculum senescens*, of an age that grows old (NSP, 118).

It is profane history that has no *eidos* or essence; it is meaningless. Sacred history has a meaningful essence, the progressing "types of truth." This distinction explains Voegelin's equivocal use of the term "history." His account of meaning in history is guided by the assumption that a sacred meaning of history can be discerned, a point that also agrees with Schelling's distinction between "interior" (sacred) and "exterior" (profane) historiographies. This is an important point. Although Voegelin's terminology changes in later works, this distinction is retained throughout all of his latest historiography.

The need for a new sacred history is addressed explicitly in the first and second volumes of *Order and History*. The model for interpreting the "effective past in relation to the historical present" was "set by St. Paul in Romans," wherein Christian faith and grace succeed the natural order of the Gentiles and the Law of the Jews:

The historical present was understood by St. Paul as the life under the divine revelation through Christ, while the effective past surrounding the new society was furnished by Jews and Gentiles. All three of the communities—Christians, Jews, and Gentiles—belonged to one mankind as they all participated in divine order; but the order had been revealed to them in different degrees of clarity, increasing in chronological succession. . . . History and its order, thus, were established by the measure in which various societies approached to the maximal clarity of divine revelation [*i.e.*, in Christ].

Voegelin refers to Paul's writing as "a masterful creation of historical order." It was limited only by the relatively scant knowledge that Paul had of other cultures. "Obviously," Voegelin grants, "the construction could not be ultimate but would have to be amended with changes and enlargements of the empirical horizon" (OHI: 131).

The first amendments to receive attention by Voegelin are "the *Civitas Dei* of St. Augustine and the parallel *History against the Pagans* of Orosius." These attempts to relate the horizons of Greek and Roman culture to Christianity, though theoretically sound, are rejected by Voegelin as

“premature generalizations from the phenomena known at the time.” His rejection is based on later revisions from greater expansions of the “empirical horizon.” To be sure, the Augustinian conception was a great success. It was transmitted through the Middle Ages and still served as the basic model when Bossuet “brought it up to date for the last time, in his *Discourse on Universal History of 1681*” (*OH* II: 14). However, after Bossuet the distinction between sacred and profane history broke down. Voegelin explains:

The construction had always suffered under the difficulty that the events of Israelite history, as far back as they were known through the Biblical narrative, followed by the appearance of Christ and the history of the Church, had been elevated, under the title of an *historia sacra*, to the rank of the representative history of mankind, while the history of the cosmological empires, Hellas and Rome, had been reduced to a byplay of profane history, uneasily connected with the representative history through such categories as the *praeparatio evangelica*. . . . In this respect the Augustinian construction was heir to the defects of the Pauline method of historical interpretation. Even in late antiquity the construction had required a generous overlooking of obstreperous phenomena, such as the existence of a Sassanian by the side of the Roman empire; during the Middle Ages, when the Roman organization of the Mediterranean area had collapsed and given way to the centrifugal, parallel organizations of the Byzantine-Orthodox, Arabic-Islamic, and Western-Christian civilizations, the conflict with reality had worsened; and by the eighteenth century, with the rise of Russia to great-power rank and the beginning familiarity with the size and civilizational rank of China, it had become unbearable (*Ibid.*, 14-5).

It would seem that the *historia sacra* of Christian theology has become empirically untenable, specifically with regard to its claim to representative universality. The empirical horizon has expanded to the point where parallel histories are known from various civilizations—each claiming superiority over the others, and none transcending the parochial nature of the enterprise itself. According to Voegelin, this is how the matter appeared to Voltaire in his critical work, *Essay on General History* (1756).

Voegelin says that it was comparatively easy for Voltaire to show that “a europocentric, unilinear construction of history” was untenable because it “had to omit such phenomena as China, Russia, and the Arab world.” Clearly, Voegelin is sympathetic to the need for considering the problems that arise for developmental history when the empirical horizon expands. But he remains

unpersuaded by the level of Voltaire's critique. His "attack," Voegelin complains, was conducted "primarily on the phenomenal level," and its lack of philosophical substance is revealing: "the blow was no sooner delivered than it was clear that even a defective construction [*i.e.*, the Augustinian], which had at least a grip on the problem, was better than the dilettantic smartness of phenomenal argument" (*Ibid.*, 15). In terms recalling the style of analysis from the "Last Orientation," Voegelin contends that Voltaire was an historical phenomenalist. He criticized others while retaining an unexamined historical faith of his own, the faith in "progress toward the reason of the eighteenth-century bourgeoisie." This faith in the progressive character of rationality could serve Voltaire as a substitute for Augustine's *historia sacra*, however, "only under the condition that nobody would raise the fundamental question where and how the symbolism of an historical mankind had originated." When this question is raised in light of the expanding horizon of historical knowledge, Voegelin discovers that "mankind is not constituted through a survey of phenomena by even the most erudite historian, but through the experience of order in the present under God." The notion of an historical progress of reason or spirit, assumed by Voltaire, is a Christian discovery. Thus, considered historically, Voltaire retained the style of thinking that originates in Christian historicism, despite his best efforts to free himself from the tradition. Voltaire's attack "did not resolve any problems—it could only bring them into the open."

Others attempted to rectify this problem. Spengler, and the early Toynbee (in the first six volumes of his *Study of History*), attempted to understand historical order "in radical isolation against the *historia sacra*." They found history to reveal a meaningless rise and fall of empires on the profane level. They eliminated the Christian meaning of "mankind and its history" in the process, however, and reached "the impasse of self-annihilation" (*Ibid.*, 16). Voegelin diagnoses the central "defect" in their efforts with a distinctively Schellingian notion, without mentioning Schelling as the source of his critical orientation. First, he says that Spengler and Toynbee show a

complete disregard for meaningful history as an “inner form.”⁶ Voegelin alludes to “many factors” which have contributed to this problem, but the greatest is this: Both Spengler and the early Toynbee, unlike Schelling, fail to emerge from the crisis of their historical situation; they fail to interpret the meaning of history in light of the *philosophia perennis*; they remain “burdened with the remnants of certain humanistic traditions, more specifically in their late liberal-bourgeois form, according to which civilizations are mystical entities producing cultural phenomena such as myths and religions, arts and sciences.” Unlike Schelling, they think that civilizations produce myths and other spiritual artifacts, that reality is socially constructed. Voegelin attempts to transcend their efforts by accepting the converse “principle,” arguing that societies are in fact produced by concrete experiences of trans-cultural reality. He protests: “Neither of the two thinkers has accepted the [Schellingian] principle that experiences of order, as well as their symbolic expressions, are not products of a civilization but its constitutive forms” (*OH* I: 125-6). In Schellingian terms, a “people” is born simultaneously with its myths. A self-conscious, pre-existent culture does not produce its myths; rather, mythic or revelatory experiences of the divine produce the self-understanding of a people. Two decades earlier, in his *Rasse und Staat* (1933), Voegelin openly praised this insight as distinctively Schellingian. He described it as “the first profound insight into the religious nature, in the broadest sense, of all community formation.”⁷ In the first volume of *Order and History*, Voegelin retains this notion without calling attention to its source.

Hegel attempted to construct a different philosophy of history, this time “from the side of the *historia sacra*.” He thought that a representatively human history could be “expanded beyond the Judaeo-Christian sacred history by demonstrating the participation of all human societies in the

⁶ For more descriptions of historical meaning as an “inner” form, see *OH* I: 125, 126, 355, 409f.; *OH* II: 7; *Anam.*, 158.

⁷ See *Race and State*. Ruth Hein, trans., Klaus Vondung, ed. *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, vol. II. (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1997), 150-1.

unfolding of the Logos [spiritual order] in time." Voegelin has considerable praise for Hegel's attempt. He says that Hegel's success was "remarkable," given the state of historical knowledge in nineteenth-century Germany. However, Voegelin also notes a "serious defect" in the attempt, the cause of its "ultimate failure." In order to make his progressive history work, Hegel had to transform the self-consciousness of ancient Greek philosophers, Christian saints, and the general notion of human finitude that persists to this day. He needed to attempt a reduction of "the Logos of revelation to the logos of philosophy, and the logos of philosophy to the dialectics of consciousness. Philosophy (*Liebe zum Wissen*) was supposed to advance toward Gnosis (*wirkliches Wissen*)⁸—and that could be done only through anaesthetizing the philosopher's sensitiveness for the borderline between the knowable and the unknowable." The mystery described formerly in symbols such as "transcendent being" had to be brought fully within the "immanent" grasp of the dialectician. The effort was futile. "The superbly skilful manipulation of the gnostic symbolism could, of course, not abolish the mystery—either of the order of being, or of an historical mankind—but the sheer massiveness of the dialectical work, the vast expansion of the gnostic *opus* to the limits of the phenomenal world, could push the mystery so far out of sight that the impossible at least appeared to have become possible" (*OH* II: 16-8).

Finally, a third revision of traditional historiography was attempted by Jaspers and the later Toynbee.⁹ In his work *On the Origin and Goal of History*, Jaspers grants that "philosophy of history has its roots in Christian faith." But precisely for this reason he argues that it cannot be valid for those who do not accept the specific points of the faith. The universal religion cannot produce a universal philosophy of history. He thus seeks to find an empirical axis of world history that yields

⁸ Hegel, *Phaenomenologie des Geistes*, Hoffmeister, ed., (Hamburg, 1952), 12 (Voegelin's parenthetical additions).

⁹ Karl Jaspers, *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte* (Zurich, 1949); and Arnold J. Toynbee, *A Study of History*, Volumes VII-X., (London, 1954).

a defensible sense of meaning for all of humanity, including Christians, an epochal time that would be equally convincing to people from the Orient and Occident. He finds this epoch, Voegelin relates, "in the spiritual processes which take place in China and India, in Iran, Israel, and Hellas, between 800 and 200 B.C., with a concentration about 500 B.C. when Confucius, Laotse, the Buddha, Deutero-Isaiah, Pythagoras, and Heraclitus were members of the same generation." This period refers to Jaspers' well-known "axis-time." It was allegedly during this period of history when all of the basic thought categories were created that most people continue to presuppose today.

The later Toynbee accepts the basic presuppositions of Jaspers' axis-historiography, but he seeks to correct some of its details. First, he argues that the axis-time should be expanded considerably in order to include "the coexistence of the four higher religions—Mahayana Buddhism, Hinduism, Christianity, and Islam." Second, he rejects the concentration on the year 500 B.C.; for Buddha, Confucius, and Pythagoras were only chronological contemporaries; they did not attain the same level of spiritual insight into reality and its order. Toynbee's latest work thus turns to examine the "progress of religion" as the progress of history proper. Voegelin applauds this change. It signals the overcoming of historical nihilism in Spengler's work and a return "to the Augustinian *historia sacra*—though with the recognition of four 'higher religions' of equal dignity" (*Ibid.*, 19, 20, 21).

Both Jaspers and the later Toynbee transcend modern progressivism in their historiographies. They do not fall prey to the blinding conceit that their epoch is self-evidently the best and only continues to improve. However, Voegelin notes considerable limitations in both thinkers that help to clarify what his historiography must avoid. Toynbee was unable to include Judaism in his "higher religions," and Jaspers excluded Christianity. Moreover, both failed to discuss the significance of Moses; and both continued to show signs of embarrassment with respect to the Western style of analysis in their works. These defects signal to Voegelin that "willfulness" and "a

profound misconception of history and its structure" still weakened their historiographies.

To address the first problem, Voegelin includes a lengthy discussion of Jewish symbols in the first volume of *Order and History* and a plan for two volumes on specifically Christian problems. To address the second problem, Voegelin reflects on "the hard fact that philosophy of history has indeed arisen in the West and nowhere *but* in the West. There is no such thing as a non-Western philosophy of history. For a philosophy of history can arise only where mankind has become [consciously] historical through existence in the present under God" (*Ibid.*, 22). The uniquely Western insight into the historicity of human consciousness is valid or "representative" for all of humanity—just as the discovery of a drug in the West may be used for the treatment of physical diseases in the Orient. Voegelin's drug is the "philosophy of history." And the disease he attempts to cure is nothing less than human mortality. This point is evident, among other places, in the Augustinian epigraph with which each volume of *Order and History* is opened: "In the study of creature one should not exercise a vain and perishing curiosity, but ascend toward what is immortal and everlasting."

Although knowledgeable of Oriental cultures, most of the research for Voegelin's philosophy of history focuses on developments in Western societies. But Voegelin would not flinch from charges that his work suffers from "Europocentrism." He argues that the historicity and rationality of consciousness are fundamental constituents of humanity *per se*; so it need not concern him greatly that these notions were discovered only in the West (*Cf. ibid.*, 23). However, people from the Orient might have some misgivings. According to Voegelin, the superiority of Western spirituality entails "assimilation" for the societies that have not broken through to consciously historical existence "in Western historical form" (*Ibid.*, 22). But before the assimilation can properly take place, more work needs to be done by Western historians. The "earth-wide, imperial expansion of Western civilization since the sixteenth century A.D." has created the aforementioned confusions

among historians. The West is no longer conscious of its own historiographic superiority, due to the massive influx of newly discovered materials. "Civilizations which formerly were to us only dimly known, or entirely unknown, now fill the horizon massively; and archaeological discoveries have added to their number a past of mankind that had been lost to memory. This enormous expansion of the spatial and temporal horizon has burdened our age with the task of relating an ever more comprehensive past of mankind to our own historical form of maximal clarity, which is the Christian. It is a work that has barely begun" (*OH I*: 132). Voegelin accepts the "burden" of the "task," and undertakes to write a new sacred or developmental history, this time in the Augustinian-Schellingian style. Thus, when he says that history has no *eidos*, he is speaking only of profane history.

Faith and Philosophical Historiography: The Historical Progression of Truth

One equivocation has been clarified, but another one rises to take its place; for Voegelin is unclear about the cognitive dimension of his developmental history. Is its notion of advancing truth ultimately supported by classical philosophy, Christian faith, or perhaps some defensible combination of the two? At times, he suggests that historical advances in existential truth can be proven by philosophical analysis. He argues that there is an "intelligible order of history," and this "must be sought through a theoretical analysis of institutions and experiences of order, as well as of the form that results from their interpretation." That is to say, the source of "historical objectivity . . . must be sought in historical form itself; and conversely, if there is a suspicion of subjectivity, it must attach again to the form." Historical form, he continues, will appear to be subjective only if "faith is misinterpreted as a 'subjective' experience." If, however, faith is understood as an experienced event in which God has entered the human soul at particular times and distinctive ways in history, then the "historical form" is revealed to be "an ontologically real event in history." This is the end to which Voegelin's philosophy of history attempts to lead. Faith, he continues, "must be

understood as an event of this nature, as long as we base our conception of history on a critical analysis of the literary sources which report the event and do not introduce subjectivity ourselves by arbitrary, ideological surmising." The philosophical explication of faith symbols, therefore, "will cast an ordering ray of objective truth over the field of history in which the event objectively occurred" (*Ibid.*, 62-3, 130). It seems that, in accordance with the distinction I made in the previous chapter,¹⁰ teleological faith is not required to accept Voegelin's "theoretical analysis" of history's "intelligible order"; for history is an "intricate dialectical process," an "objective reality" with a "causal mechanism of differentiation" (*Ibid.*, 128, 129). Accordingly, it can be interpreted with the impartiality of philosophical science. But this is not Voegelin's last word on faith and philosophical historiography.

Like Schelling, Voegelin typically speaks of "objective" advances in truth when he interprets the order of history before its climax in Christ. However, once Voegelin reaches the point where Christian symbols need to be interpreted, he begins to speak about faith in a different way—without calling attention to the change in meaning that comes with his use of the term. He describes faith as a *sacrificium intellectus*, a sacrifice of the intellect, and says that such faith is needed in order to accept the superiority of Christian historiography.¹¹ When Voegelin emphasizes this need, his understanding of faith is typically taken from a verse in Paul's *Letter to the Hebrews* (11:1), where faith is described as "the substance of things hoped for and the proof of things unseen." Voegelin

¹⁰ Cf. *supra*, 250.

¹¹ Letter from Voegelin to Alfred Schütz, dated 1 January 1953, in *The Philosophy of Order*. Peter J. Opitz & Gregor Sebba, eds., (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1981), 451. Voegelin does not want to suggest that the "sacrifice" amounts to a capitulation to dogmatism. Voegelin explains: "In the 19th-century atmosphere of liberal editorializing, the sacrifice of the intellect was understood as an abdication of reason through the acceptance of dogma. But this is not how it was understood from Athanasius to Kant. For Athanasius *sacrificium intellectus* signifies the obligation not to operate with the human intellect in regions inaccessible to it, i.e., in the regions of faith" (*Ibid.*). But, of course, what remains "inaccessible" is precisely the question at issue. One need not be a liberal editorialist to raise it.

interprets: "Ontologically, the substance of things hoped for is nowhere to be found but in faith itself; and, epistemologically, there is no proof for things unseen but again this very faith." Voegelin admits that this circularity creates a "tenuous bond" with respect to the "communication" between human beings and "the world-transcendent God." This bond may "snap easily," since "[u]ncertainty is the very essence of Christianity" (*NSP*, 122). Nonetheless, this is the bond that is needed, Voegelin maintains, in order to understand the superiority of Christian truth in historical differentiation. Without such faith, the order of history will appear to be little more than an "abysmal mystery," an "instrument of divine revelation for ultimate purposes that are unknown equally to the men of all ages" (*OHI*: 129).

Voegelin's use of a teleological understanding of faith to contend that human cognition is limited comes with its ambiguities. It should not be confused, for example, with Socrates' appeals to the limitations of human knowledge. Unlike Socrates, Voegelin's faith is the "*cognitio fidei*," the trust behind which cognition of an historically determinate sort is implied. The specific *cognitio* of Voegelin's *fides* is found in his claim that "[f]aith is the anticipation of a supernatural perfection of man," that the "destiny of man lies not in the future but in eternity" (*NSP*, 124, 157; *OH II*: 4). Voegelin does not explain why this ambiguous cognition is superior to the unambiguous ignorance that results from Socrates' hypothetical lines of reasoning—why belief in the "supernatural perfection of man" is superior to the knowledge that such anticipations describe only part of what the mystery of death might entail. The ambiguous cognition implied by Voegelin's understanding of faith needs to be kept in mind. As in Schelling, his understanding of faith is primarily teleological.¹² This is the type of faith that guides his entire historiography, even though his discussions of the matter are sufficiently ambiguous to suggest that he has not left philosophical reasoning behind in order to

¹² In his later work, Voegelin continues to speak of faith in the sense of *Hebrews* 11:1. See, for example, "Immortality" (1967), *CW* 12: 52; *OH IV* (1974): 329.

construct a theology of history.

This ambiguity has caused an accentual divide between Voegelin's interpreters. German readers tend to emphasize the hypothetical type of faith in Voegelin's work, thus leading them to interpret Voegelin as a philosophical historian and political scientist. North American readers tend to emphasize the teleological type of faith, thus leading them to interpret Voegelin as a Christian historian who draws upon classical philosophy as the handmaiden to his theology.¹³ As I have indicated, both types of faith are evident in Voegelin's writings, and the teleological type outweighs the simple trust in presuppositions that Voegelin inherits from classical philosophy. To support this thesis, his account of the historical progression of truth needs to be examined in greater detail.

a.) "Cosmological Truth": Mythic Order in the Ancient Near East

Voegelin's term for the earliest type of religious representation is "cosmological truth." Its symbolic form is myth. Voegelin's designation of this period in history corresponds, I suggest, to the period and methods of interpretation that were found in Schelling's account of "mythological religion." For Voegelin, as with Schelling, the cosmological style of truth represents the gods as identical to eminent things in the cosmos. The people in cosmological societies ostensibly had no

¹³ For representative examples of German and North American interpreters, see Helmut Kuhn, "Das Problem einer philosophischen Historiographie: Zum Werke von Eric Voegelin," in *Zeitschrift für Politik* 28 (1981): 116-29; English versions of the Germanic reading may be found in Jürgen Gebhardt, "Toward the Process of Universal Mankind: The Formation of Voegelin's Philosophy of History," in *Eric Voegelin's Thought: A Critical Appraisal*. Ellis Sandoz, ed., (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1982), 67-86, and "The Vocation of the Scholar," in *International and Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Eric Voegelin*. Stephen A. McKnight & Geoffrey L. Price, eds., (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1997), 10-34. For a North American reading that stresses Voegelin's faith, see Michael P. Morrissey, *Consciousness and Transcendence: The Theology of Eric Voegelin* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994). Frederick G. Lawrence has noticed a similar problem among Voegelin scholars, specifically between Jürgen Gebhardt and Paul Caringella. See Lawrence's chapter on "The Problem of Eric Voegelin, Mystic Philosopher and Scientist," *International and Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Eric Voegelin, op. cit.*, 35-58. Lawrence attempts to bridge the accentual divide between rational scholarship and meditative faith by highlighting "Voegelin's Augustinian approach." This, Lawrence contends, "leads [Voegelin] to avoid rationalism, while restoring reason to its classic status" (p. 58). Lawrence is certainly correct to say that Voegelin avoided the unpersuasive reduction of reason to modern "rationalism," but his reliance upon Augustine is precisely what calls into question whether Voegelin has indeed understood reason in its "classic status."

consciousness of a world-transcendent divinity. Their myths remained “compact” or intracosmic. But Voegelin does not refer to “cosmological truth” as a type of experience and symbolization that vanished with the societies in which it first appeared. He grants that its symbols are still evident today as expressions of the “primary experience of the cosmos.” For example, in the wake of Schelling’s historiography, Voegelin says that Chinese civilizations remained “cosmological” up to the twentieth century (*OHI*: 61), even though other civilizations in the West “advanced” beyond this symbolic form. Despite this qualification, however, Voegelin argues that a temporal progression of truth can be discerned by interpreting Mesopotamian, Achaemenian (Persian), and Egyptian mythologies, the principle representatives of his “cosmological” style of truth.

Voegelin’s placement of the aforementioned societies in an historical line of advancing truth resembles Schelling’s account of how the potencies of nature become actualized during the time of “mythological religion.” Voegelin’s interpretation of Mesopotamian mythology is equivalent to Schelling’s account of the emergence of potency B; his interpretation of Persian mythology resembles Schelling’s account of A²; and his reading of Egyptian mythology resembles Schelling’s account of A³. Voegelin thinks that Mesopotamian society produced the most compact—*i.e.*, tautegorical—symbols of the societies under consideration. He says that the gods of the *Enuma elish*, a cosmogonic epic (*ca.* 1500 B.C.E.), are identical to the world: “The gods *are* the world and the progressive structural differentiation of the universe is, therefore, a story of the creation of the gods. The cosmogony is at the same time a theogony” (*Ibid.*, 41). The Egyptians are said to have come closest to a genuine consciousness of divine transcendence, thus indicating that all of the potencies have become relatively actual. However, on the basis of this text alone, it cannot be established with certainty that Voegelin presupposes a Schellingian progression of natural potencies in his historiography. Voegelin’s five and one half pages on the Achaemenian empire allow one to see the establishment of a dualistic theology (*Ibid.*, 46-51), but it is not clear that he understands this

theology to indicate the emergence of Schelling's second potency (A²). What is more, when Voegelin turns to discuss the triad of Egyptian gods (Amon, Re, and Ptah), he says that there is "no hidden meaning in the number three." He says that the triadic symbolism was motivated by political circumstances: "it might as well have been four or five gods, if the political situation had required them," *i.e.*, to sustain the unity of the empire (*Ibid.*, 87).

These points suggest that Voegelin has left behind the natural or universal dimension of Schelling's *Potenzenlehre*. If he were developing a strictly Schellingian reading of these societies, he would ascribe motivation for their symbols of spiritual order to the world-wide actualization of divine potencies in the human soul. Instead, he turns curiously to suggest that pragmatic events motivated the sacred symbolism of the Egyptians. This suggestion is uncommon in Voegelin's historiography and requires interpretation.

In Chapter 1, I cited Voegelin's agreement with Schelling's claim that a "people" is constituted by its "inner" experiences of divine order, whether its mythologists know it or not.¹⁴ Voegelin remains true to this claim, for instance, when he interprets the spiritual motivation of Jewish symbols. He warns against the "positivistic trap" that may tempt one to substitute "more probable pragmatic events for the legendary ones" in Israelite historiography (*Ibid.*, 126, 385). In other words, he argues that philosophical historians must not "demythologize" (Bultmann) the mythic traditions of order they study. Their primary task is to understand the ancient authors on their own terms.¹⁵ Demythologization obscures the sense in which spiritual truth might be found to advance in history by distorting, anachronistically, the experiences under consideration by the philosophical historian. When Voegelin interprets the Egyptians, however, he appears to be quite

¹⁴ *Cf. supra*, 23-4.

¹⁵ For Voegelin's critique of Bultmann's demythologization (*Entmythologisierung*) of ancient texts, see his essay "History and Gnosis," in *The Old Testament and Christian Faith*. Bernhard Anderson, ed., (New York: Herder and Herder, 1969), 64-89.

willing to fall into this “positivistic trap.” This methodological lapse can be explained as part of his attempt to defend the superiority of Christian symbolism in his differentiated historiography. This point is suggested by a pattern in his use and neglect of his empirical method of interpretation. On the one hand, when he is faced with interpreting Egyptian symbols that resemble later developments in Christian theology—for example, the trinitarian theology in the aforementioned Amon Hymns, and a similar conception that Egyptologists have identified in the “Memphite Theology”—Voegelin tends to diminish these similarities by appealing to their motivation in political events (*Ibid.*, 86-7; 88-95). On the other hand, when he is faced with interpreting symbols that clearly differ from later Christian developments—for example, the importance of divine kingship and the symbolization of gods in animal form—he explains the symbolism with an appeal to its “compactness” (*Ibid.*, 72-4). In more conventional language, Voegelin allows the Egyptians to be primitive but hesitates to accord full weight to their spiritual sensitivity.

Voegelin says that the distinguishing feature of all societies ordered by the cosmological myth is the “consubstantiality”—or “compactness”—between humanity and the divine cosmos evident in their symbols.¹⁶ He says that it is nearly impossible for twentieth-century readers to interpret the ancient symbols, due to the fact that contemporary readers presuppose the differentiation of immanent and transcendent aspects of reality as a habit of thought. Accordingly, when he turns to consider the Egyptian “Memphite Theology” (*ca.* 3100 B.C.E.), he says that the “substantial oneness of events on the various levels of existence cannot be communicated by an analysis at all; we must let the text speak for itself.” But Voegelin offers an analysis, nonetheless. The gods of the Memphite Theology, it seems, are symbols for mundane experiences, mainly political events culminating in the divinity of the Pharaoh (*Ibid.*, 89-90). Voegelin attempts to defend this point

¹⁶ *Cf.* *OH* I: 16, 78, 84, 86-7, 89, 92, 95, 100, 106.

even though he grants that a number of features in Egyptian theology resemble later developments normally associated with Christianity, for example: (1) the authors of the Memphite Theology (in 712 B.C.E.) “must have had a rather detached [or differentiated] attitude toward their own product” because they “could intersperse their myth of the creation with ‘footnotes,’ relating the principles which they used in constructing it”; (2) they were “apparently. . . aware of the problem of a creation *ex nihilo*”; (3) the highest god, Amon, was occasionally described as “a hidden, invisible god, whose name is unknown”; and (4) the authors of Egyptian mortuary texts (*ca.* 2050 B.C.E.) sensed that “their souls open to the peace of the god” only “in the beyond.” These points seem to indicate that a differentiated level of consciousness was experienced and symbolized by the members of this “cosmological” society. Despite this indication, however, Voegelin maintains that no experience of divine transcendence ever truly occurred in Egypt (*Ibid.*, 93, 91, 86, 101; *cf.*, 98ff.). “The cosmological culture of Egypt never was broken effectively by anthropological or soteriological developments” (*Ibid.*, 57). Like Schelling, Voegelin says that the Egyptians proved “tenaciously resistant to differentiating experiences and a reorientation of human existence toward transcendent divinity” (*Ibid.*, 74; *cf.* 82). They resisted, in Schellingian terms, the advance of the completely spiritual principle (A³) and clung tenaciously to the material ground (B) of divinity.

To be sure, Voegelin shows some appreciation for the cosmological type of truth. He acknowledges that the cosmological myth “holds together the blocs [of immanent and transcendent dimensions of reality] which in later history not only will be distinguished, but also are liable to fall apart.” The myth guards against “the extremes of a radically other-worldly faith and of an agnostic metaphysics. . . . Differentiation, one would have to say, is not an unqualified good; it is fraught with the dangers of radically dissociating the experiential blocs held together by the myth, as well as of losing the experience of consubstantiality in the process” (*Ibid.*, 84). This is a rare admission, but it is also relatively inconsequential to Voegelin’s philosophy of history. Though qualified

periodically by generous statements such as this, Voegelin's historiography retains its character as a subtle drive toward the eschatological consciousness of Christian historicism.

The historical discovery of divine transcendence allegedly requires the experience of a "leap in being," Voegelin's equivalent phrase for the "spiritual crisis" that was found in Schelling's historiography. This "leap" is what constitutes the decisive epochal change in the history of consciousness. It is "the epochal event that breaks the compactness of the early cosmological myth and establishes the order of man in his immediacy under [the world-transcendent] God." The leap occurs twice in the history of humanity, though roughly at the same time, in ancient Israel and Hellas. But it has different affects on the people in these civilizations. Voegelin explains:

The two occurrences, while they run parallel in time and have in common their opposition to the Myth, are independent of each other; and the two experiences differ so profoundly in content that they become articulate in the two different symbolisms of Revelation and Philosophy. . . . Leaps in being, to be sure, have occurred elsewhere; but a Chinese personal existence under the cosmic *tao*, or an Indian personal existence in acosmistic illumination, is not an Israelite or Christian existence under God. While the Chinese and Indian societies have certainly gained the consciousness of universal humanity, only the Judaeo-Christian response to revelation has achieved historical consciousness (*OH* II: 1, 22).

Like Schelling, and certainly many others, Voegelin emphasizes the differences between revelation and philosophy in the differentiated period of his historiography. The "leap in being" lies at the core of this distinction. It prepares the way for Christian historians eventually to look upon the symbolic forms of Greek philosophy and Jewish revelation as the twin "Old Testaments of Christianity" (*Ibid.*, 24).¹⁷ As with Schelling's account of the "spiritual crisis" that distinguishes advancing epochs of spiritual truth in history, Voegelin's account of the "leap in being" is a significant factor in his reading of world-historical developments as a *praeparatio evangelica*.

¹⁷ Voegelin refers to Clement of Alexandria (*Stromateis*, VI) for the notion that Christianity has two Old Testaments. Schelling knew the *Stromateis* (Cf., *Philosophie der Mythologie*, *Werke* II,2: 187). He quoted it often but did not explicitly use the theme mentioned by Voegelin.

b.) "Anthropological Truth": Tragedy and Philosophy in Ancient Greece

Voegelin says that "anthropological truth" first appears in the political culture of Athens and specifically in tragedy. He uses this phrase "with the understanding that [it] covers the whole range of problems connected with the psyche as the sensorium of transcendence" (*NSP*, 77). Voegelin's appeal to the "whole range" of problems beyond tragedy is an allusion to the specific insights of the "mystic philosophers," mainly Plato and Aristotle, who discover the transcendent nature of the divine and the immanent nature of the soul as the site or "sensorium" where this aspect of divinity is experienced. The Greek tragedians and philosophers discover the soul, differentiate its structure, and begin to suppose that the divine transcends all things human and cosmological: "the psyche itself is found as a new center in man at which he experiences himself as open toward transcendental reality. Moreover, this center is not found as if it were an object that had been present all the time and only escaped notice." The philosophers do not discover an *a priori* structure of the mind, which has always been the condition for humans to experience transcendence, merely unawares. Rather, it seems that Voegelin is presupposing, at this point, that a Schellingian potency has become historically actualized in the philosophers' leap in being: "The psyche as the region in which transcendence is experienced must be differentiated [actualized] out of a more compact [potential] structure of the soul; it must be developed and named." This is not a natural actualization of potentials in human nature, one which would occur throughout humanity. It is an historical actualization, which is specific to the West. It is, however, one which Voegelin takes to be "representative" for all of humanity. But how do the philosophers come to this condition of openness with respect to the divine? Is the soul opened by God, or do they open it themselves? Voegelin equivocates in his answer to these questions. He says, at times, that this opening "is as much action as it is passion" (*Ibid.*, 67). At other times he is more clear: the Hellenic leap in being is not based on a divine revelation. When Plato describes the erotic "mystical ascent" toward the

beautiful itself, in his *Symposium*, he arrives only at “the border of transcendence” (*Ibid.*, 66).

Voegelin's clearest account of Platonic philosophy is found in a letter to Leo Strauss, written while Voegelin was preparing the lectures that were eventually published as *The New Science of Politics*. Voegelin writes: “I would say that the problem of the Platonic myth and dialogue has a close connection to the question of revelation. 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. The myth of Plato seems to be an intermediate form—no longer the polytheistic myth that, because of the concentration of his soul, had become impossible; but it is not yet the free diagnosis of the divine source of the knowledge of order.” Like Schelling, Voegelin interprets Plato as one of the Greek mystics who stood on the historical border between the compactness of cosmological myth and the superior differentiation of divine transcendence and revelatory grace in Judaeo-Christian theology. Plato was able to transcend the cognitive limitations of myth, but he failed to understand the revelatory constitution of order with complete freedom. Why was this so? A second Schellingian notion, retained by Voegelin in the previously cited quotation, will help to answer this question. Notice that Voegelin appeals to the “concentration” of Plato's soul. This refers to the need for humanity and divinity to separate completely, in consciousness, in order for revelation to occur. Like Schelling, Voegelin says that “Revelation in the Jewish and Christian sense seems possible only when man historically developed a consciousness of his humanness, which clearly separates him from transcendence. Such consciousness is, for example, not yet given in Homer's polytheism or with Hesiod. Divine and human are still interconnected.” Voegelin continues his comments, presupposing another point from Schelling's critical study of mythology, his rejection of “anthropomorphic” explanations of mythology:

This fact is veiled through the unfortunate theory of “anthropomorphism” in polytheistic cultures. So far as the Greek gods are concerned there is no anthropomorphic representation of the divine, but rather a theomorphic symbolization of the contents of the human soul. The

development of the soul . . . appears to me to be the process in which man dedivinized himself and realized the humanity of his spiritual life. Only with this spiritual concentration will it be possible to experience oneself as being addressed by a world-transcendent God.

The reason why Plato received no “direct announcement” is that this separation remained incomplete in his soul. This was not a failing of Plato’s personal ability to symbolize the divine; it was simply occasioned by his historical position. In the dialogues, “God does not speak unmediated, but only as mediated through Socrates-Plato. Insofar as the place of God as the addresser is taken by Socrates-Plato, as the speaker in the dialogue, the fullest expression of ‘theomorphic’ polytheism seems to be the final reason for the dialogue form; the divine and the human are not yet completely separated. . . . Plato seems to have been aware of this problem of his divinity in the polytheistic sense.”¹⁸

Like Schelling, Voegelin grants only that Plato “prefigured” the superior understanding of divine-human reality that was gained by the appearance of Christianity: “The leap in being, toward the transcendent source of order, is real in Plato,” and later ages have “recognized rightly” his account of the paradigmatic polis in heaven (*Cf., Republic 592b*) as “a prefiguration of St. Augustine’s conception of the *civitas Dei*. Nevertheless, a prefiguration is not the figuration itself. Plato is not a Christian” (*OH III:92*; also 226, 366).¹⁹

Neither does Voegelin find revelatory experience or consciousness in Aristotle’s writings. He refers to Aristotle’s account of the impossibility of friendship (*philia*) between gods and humans,

¹⁸ Letter from Voegelin to Strauss, dated 22 April 1951, in *Faith and Political Philosophy: The Correspondence Between Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin, 1934-1964*. Peter Emberley & Barry Cooper, trans. & ed., (University Park, Pa.: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 87, 82, 87.

¹⁹ Geoffrey L. Price has recently traced the development of what I have called Voegelin’s differentiated historiography from the *History of Political Ideas* to the first three volumes of *Order and History*. See “Critical History after Augustine and Orosius: Voegelin’s Return to Plato,” *International and Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Eric Voegelin, op. cit.*, 84-116. While offering insightful comparisons between two massive bodies of text, the suggested importance of Plato in Voegelin’s historiographic method is called into question by Plato’s limited status as a representative of “anthropological truth,” and by the continuing importance of Augustine that emerges more clearly in Voegelin’s later work.

due to their radical inequality, as proof of this point (*NSP*, 77).²⁰ He states that “[t]he impossibility of *philia* between God and man may be considered typical for the whole range of anthropological truth. The experiences that were explicated into a theory of man by the mystic philosophers had in common the accent on the human side of the orientation of the soul toward divinity. The soul orients itself toward a God who rests in his immovable transcendence; it reaches out toward divine reality, but it does not meet an answering movement from beyond” (*Ibid.*, 77-8).²¹ The experience of an “answering movement” appears only with the historical advent of Judaeo-Christian revelation.

c.) “Soteriological Truth”: Salvation History in Jewish and Christian Revelation

The anthropological truth of the Greek philosophers prepares the way for Christians eventually to attempt a rational account of their faith. Hellenistic philosophy allows Justin, Origen, Clement of Alexandria and Augustine, among other church Fathers, to offer a reasoned account of how God is both transcendent and yet intelligibly related to the human soul’s experiences. Jewish revelation, the second “Old Testament” in Voegelin’s historiography, prepares Christianity for its Messiah and allows Paul to formulate the historical progression from the natural and divine law of the pagans and Jews to God’s full revelation in Christ. Soteriological truth, therefore, has its immediate beginning in Judaism.

Jewish Revelation

Voegelin’s most substantial account of Jewish symbols and experience is found in *Israel and Revelation*, the first volume of *Order and History*. The volume opens with the word “God” and concludes with the word “Jesus” (*OH* I: 1, 515). This appears to be no accident. Like Schelling,

²⁰ Cf. Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics* 1158b29–1159a13. In making this claim, Voegelin overlooks another passage from the *Ethics* that contradicts his central claim. At one point, Aristotle says that one who pursues intellectual activity (νοῦν ἐνεργῶν) is “beloved of the gods [θεοφιλέστατος]” (1179a23-32).

²¹ This understanding of Aristotle in particular, and of the Greeks generally, is elaborated in the third volume of *Order and History* (Cf., *OH* III: 362-66).

Voegelin tends to favor Jewish experiences of revelation that allude to the future of theophany in the Messiah. He praises messianic prophets, and criticizes others who dwell on the perfection of the Law or imply that the fulfilment of human nature can take place within this life. Voegelin's account of Jewish revelation begins by suggesting a fundamental limitation in cosmological symbolism. He contends that societies ordered by the cosmological myth sensed "the lasting of cosmic and the passing of social order," but this observation "did not penetrate the soul decisively and, consequently, did not lead to new insights concerning the true order of being and existence" (*Ibid.*, 111). These "new insights" began to unfold when the transcendent God began to liberate humanity from cosmological bondage, at some time in the second millennium B.C.E.: "In Genesis 15 the decisive step of liberation occurs, when Yahweh makes his berith [covenant] with Abram." On this occasion, "the peculiar nature of a berith with Yahweh reveals itself. In the mundane situation of Abram . . . nothing has changed. The new domain of Yahweh is not yet the political order of a people in Canaan." The God's newly created presence in history is limited to "the soul of Abram." It yields an order that originates "through the inrush of divine reality into his soul and from this point of origin expands into a social body in history. At the time of its inception it is no more than the life of a man who trusts in God; but this new existence, founded on the leap in being, is pregnant with future" (*Ibid.*, 194).

Voegelin's appeal to the novelty of Abram's experience is questionable in a philosophical study of order. To be sure, Abram's experience of the divine may be "new" with respect to the historical records. But Voegelin's philosophy of history takes this novelty, the beginning of the "leap in being" in Israelite revelation, to indicate more than a change in the surviving records of human experience. The novelty indicates to Voegelin that "a change in being" has occurred, "with consequences for the order of existence" (*Ibid.*, 11). Thus, Voegelin's claim about Abram's novelty is not simply historical in the conventional sense of the word; it is an ontological claim based on

Schelling's process theology. But Schelling's guidance is not acknowledged in the first volume of *Order and History*. Voegelin equates historical existence and the order of being without explaining how this equation can be justified philosophically. In other words, it is not clear why an apparent change in the experience of an individual human also reflects a change in the order of being itself. Earlier, in the "Last Orientation," Voegelin addressed this problem with the help of Schelling's philosophy of the unconscious. The link between existence and being was accounted for in the presupposition that genuine symbols arise through "protodialectic experiences." These were described as genuine "irruptions" of being that emerge from the soul's unconscious depth because it is substantially identical to the ground of being itself. By presupposing the substantial identity of the soul and divine ground, the history of experience and symbolization could be read as the history of being revealed through the changing record of protodialectic experiences. But Schelling's philosophy of the unconscious is not mentioned by Voegelin in the first volume of *Order and History*. What is more, as discussed in Chapter 3, there are few clear references to the conception of substantial identity needed to understand Voegelin's presuppositions about the historical unfolding of being. However, these presuppositions are clarified—with a direct reference to Schelling—in a contemporary letter that Voegelin wrote to his friend, Robert Heilman. Voegelin writes that

it is peculiar to the nature of man that it unfolds its potentialities historically. Not that historically anything "new" comes up—human nature is always wholly present—but there are modes of clarity and degrees of comprehensiveness in man's understanding of himself and his position in the world. . . . What I have just adumbrated (most inadequately, to be sure) is the basis of historical interpretation since Herder and Baader and Schelling. History is the unfolding of the human Psyche; historiography is the reconstruction of the unfolding through the psyche of the historian. The basis of historical interpretation is the identity of substance (the psyche) in the object and the subject of interpretation; and its purpose is participation in the great dialogue that goes through the centuries among men about their nature and destiny.²²

²² Letter from Voegelin to Heilman, dated 22 August 1956 (*CW* 19: 29; Voegelin's parenthetical additions).

These comments reveal that Voegelin continues to accept the basic presuppositions in Schelling's philosophy of consciousness and history, *viz.*, his notions of substantial identity and the unfolding of the "potentialities" of human nature in history. This conception of history's order and the position of consciousness therein may allow one to organize historical records based on concrete experiences rather than abstract ideas, but the central problem for a philosophy of historical advances in truth remains unresolved. Without knowledge of human experiences predating the emergence of written records, it remains impossible to say whether any experience of clarity—though not of human nature itself—is new to the order of being, rather than simply to the small part of experience glimpsed through the historical records. "Being" may have "irrupted" in similar ways a countless number of times in the unknown past—simply without being recorded. This problem was not unknown to Aristotle. Nor was it unknown to Voegelin. He quotes decisive passages from Aristotle's works, all of which indicate that important discoveries may have occurred an indefinite number of times in the past. But Voegelin draws no conclusions from them for his philosophy of history (*OH* III: 289-91).²³ His frequent appeals to the mystery of history tend to overlook this insight with respect to the unknown past; they tend to appeal only to the unknowable future.²⁴ In fact, however, it is not clear that any experience is ontologically new in the historical past. And without being able to establish ontological novelty, Voegelin and Schelling are unable to read even the "inner" history of experience as a history of being, changing self-revelations of the divine, and so on. Voegelin overlooks this problem and proceeds to elaborate a progressive account of spiritual truth in history.

²³ The Aristotelian passages in question are *Meteorologica* (I,3); *Metaphysics* (1074b); *Politics* (1329a40-1329b35).

²⁴ The knowable past and unknowable future are historiographic themes that Voegelin takes from Schelling's account of the onto-historical dimensions of *anamnesis* (*Cf.*, "LO," 212-13). These themes continue throughout Voegelin's later work (*Cf.*, *NSP*, 120; *OH* I: ix; *OH* II: 2; *Anam.*, 116; *CW* 12: 96).

The “new domain of Yahweh” expands considerably from the individual soul of Abram when a politico-spiritual leader emerges among the society of Hebrews under Egyptian rule. “At the time when the Egyptians themselves strained their cosmological symbolism to the limits without being able to break the bonds of its compactness, Moses [13th cent. B.C.E.] led his people from bondage under Pharaoh to freedom under God” (*OH* I: 112). The Exodus started to become the quintessential symbol for historical meaning in strictly spiritual terms. It was animated by “a new spirit”—Voegelin’s equivalent term for Schelling’s “higher will”—, which also potentially revealed the beginning of an historical journey from death to life: “Egypt was the realm of the dead, the Sheol, in more than one sense. From death and its cult man had to wrest the life of the spirit.” However, instead of ushering in the spiritual life, the Exodus immediately yielded nothing but “the desert of indecision.” The Hebrews remained caught between “the equally unpalatable forms of nomad existence and life in a high-civilization.” This was not a specific impasse only for them. It signaled, according to Voegelin, “the eternal impasse of historical existence in the ‘world,’ that is, in the cosmos in which empires rise and fall with no more meaning than a tree growing and dying, as waves in the stream of eternal recurrence.” The Hebrews left behind one civilization and entered “the world,” a place where they too would succumb to the danger of becoming one more civilization that rises and falls without meaning. Voegelin’s interpretation of this defection from the spirit reaches sermonical heights: “By attunement with cosmic order the fugitives from the house of bondage could not find the life that they sought. When the spirit bloweth, society in cosmological form becomes Sheol, the realm of death; but when we undertake the Exodus and wander into the world, in order to found a new society elsewhere, we discover the world as the Desert. The flight leads nowhere, until we stop in order to find our bearings beyond the world” (*Ibid.*, 113).

The Hebrews did not stop to find their spiritual bearings, according to Voegelin. They took the world of Canaan in exchange for the emerging life of the spirit. And the central point of the

Exodus was obscured: "history," Voegelin writes, "is the Exodus from civilizations." History is the Exodus from "the world," all of its civilizations, which represent only the realm of death. Israel never truly recovered from its penchant to prefer cosmos over spirit: "On its pragmatic wandering through the centuries Israel did not escape the realm of the dead. In a symbolic countermovement to the Exodus under the leadership of Moses, the last defenders of Jerusalem, carrying Jeremiah with them against his will, returned to the Sheol of Egypt to die." Again, Voegelin interprets the spiritual meaning of this alleged defection with distinctively Christian imagery: "The promised land can be reached only by moving through history, but it cannot be conquered within history. The Kingdom of God lives in men who live in the world, but it is not of this world. The ambiguity of Canaan has ever since affected the structure not of Israelite history only but of the course of history in general" (*Ibid.*, 133, 114). As the Chosen People turned increasingly toward the cosmo-political realm, preferring human kings to God, it turned toward death and set in motion a pattern that repeats itself, according to Voegelin, throughout the political history of Western civilizations.

The consequences of this worldly orientation become significant for the understanding of human destiny. Safety is sought in numbers: "the spirit of God, the *ruach* of Yahweh, is present with the community and with individuals in their capacity as representatives of the community, but it is not present as the ordering force in the soul of every man." Only the community survives. The individual has no destiny beyond death. It is precisely this lack of self-consciousness in the individual that indicates to Voegelin the principle reason why philosophy did not develop among the Israelite tribes: "Only when man, while living with his fellow men in the community of the spirit, has a personal destiny in relation to God can the spiritual eroticism of the soul achieve the self-interpretation which Plato called philosophy. In Israelite history a comparable development was impossible," *i.e.*, due to its communitarian mediation of the divine. The turn toward death in the cosmo-political realm also affected adversely the extent to which the revelation of the God could

be understood. Even a “revelation of the world-transcendent divinity as personal and intense as the Mosaic (more personal and intense than ever befell a Hellenic philosopher)” is “blunted by the intramundane compactness of the tribe” (*Ibid.*, 240; *cf.*, 235ff.). The worldly choices of the Chosen People obscure the true process of history, as Exodus from the world, and the movement from death to life begins to reverse itself in the pragmatic course of events.

However, a remnant of the spiritual Exodus movement emerges as the prophetic tradition. With the emergence of the prophets Voegelin sees the third and last phase of Exodus that is glimpsed by Israelite revelation. The first phase was Abram’s emigration from Ur of the Chaldaeans, thus beginning the “Exodus from imperial civilization.” The second phase began when Yahweh and Moses led the emerging people of Israel out of Egypt; it ended when they reached “the form of a people’s theopolitical existence in rivalry with the cosmological form.” The final phase begins when the prophets Isaiah (8th cent. B.C.E.) and Jeremiah (7th cent. B.C.E.) turn away from “the concrete Israel” in order to face “the anguish of the third procreative act of divine order in history: The Exodus of Israel from itself.” The unknown author of Deutero-Isaiah experiences this anguish most acutely, around the middle of the sixth century (*Ibid.*, 491).²⁵

Like Schelling, Voegelin finds the central function of the prophets to lie in their attempts to call Israel back to the spirit of Yahweh, to resist pagan elements in the Law, and eventually to proclaim the need for a future Messiah: “The Yahwism of the Prophets still appears to be the best recognizable ‘contribution’ of Israel to the civilization of mankind, whereas the symbols concerning organized existence [the Deuteronomic Torah] seem so closely related to the cosmological myth of the time that the specific Israelite difference is difficult to determine” (*Ibid.*, 186). For Voegelin, the task of the prophets is properly spiritual and universal, in contrast to the “worldly” and parochial

²⁵ For the dates of Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Deutero-Isaiah, see *OH* I: 437, 482.

aims of the nation. They struggle “against the Law” in an attempt “to disengage the existential [*i.e.*, spiritual] from the normative issues” (*Ibid.*, 447 n. 1). Curiously, however, Voegelin criticizes one of the most spiritual of the prophets, Isaiah, when he counsels King Ahaz of Judah to stay out of “the world’s” battles. What is the basis of this criticism? This question needs to be addressed in some detail, for it bears on Voegelin’s later interpretation of Christian eschatological symbols.

The Kingdom of Judah was threatened with conquest by two enemies: first by the alliance between Israel and Syria, then by the Assyrian empire. If Judah refused to join Israel and Syria in battle against the Assyrians, it would be destroyed by them; this was the more immediate threat. If Judah later refused to pay tribute to the Assyrians, it would be destroyed by the larger empire. On both occasions, the prophet Isaiah offers similar advice to King Ahaz: Do not fight, but trust in the Holy One. “If you do not trust, you will not last.” Do not seek protection from Assyria against Israel and Syria; do not seek protection from Egypt against Assyria. Your strength lies in “returning and resting,” in “sitting still and confidence” (Is. 7:4-9; 30:15; 31:1-3). Isaiah seems to be a gentle pacifist. But such is not the case. Voegelin explains: “Isaiah’s counsel does not originate in an ethics of nonviolence; it is not calculated to lose the war in order to gain something more important than earthly victory.” Isaiah has no hopes in personal immortality; he is not a Christian pacifist. On the contrary, his counsel is offered in an attempt “to win the war by means more certain than an army” (*OHI*: 451). Voegelin’s interpretation is sound. Later, in view of the Assyrian threat, Isaiah says: “Turn to him [Yahweh] from whom you have deeply revolted. . . . ‘And the Assyrian shall fall by a sword, not of man; and a sword, not of man, shall devour him; and he shall flee from the sword, and his young men shall be put to forced labor. His rock shall pass away in terror, and his officers desert the standard in panic,’ says the Lord, whose fire is in Zion, and whose furnace is in Jerusalem” (Is. 31:6-9). Isaiah counsels trust in the “sword” of Yahweh as a spiritual means toward an intra-worldly end. The trust has a “utilitarian component,” a notion that Voegelin borrows from Gerhard

von Rad: worldly prosperity is thought to be “the reward of faith.” This point, Voegelin says, “has something to do with magic in so far as it can be understood either as a spiritualized magic or as a faith that has sunk to the magic level” (*OHI*: 450). Voegelin criticizes Isaiah’s magical inclination—his supposition that the order of the world can be changed simply by faith—as a “*metastasis*.” Voegelin writes: “The constitution of being is what it is, and cannot be affected by human fancies. Hence, the metastatic denial of the order of mundane existence is neither a true proposition in philosophy, nor a program of action that could be executed.” This faith indicates a problem with the human will, the will in defiance of God: “The will to transform reality into something which by essence it is not is the rebellion against the nature of things as ordained by God. And while the rebellion has become sublime in Isaiah’s trust that God himself will change the order of the world and let Judah win its victories without battle, the danger of derailment in various directions is obvious.” The divine ordination of the world remains what it is, “even when the one world-transcendent God is revealed as the ultimate source of order in the world, as well as in man, society, and history.” The “leap in being is not a leap out of existence.” But this confusion is implied by Isaiah’s *metastasis*. “Isaiah, we may say, has tried the impossible.” He has tried to leap into “a divinely transfigured world beyond the laws of mundane existence. The cultic restoration of cosmic divine order becomes the transfiguration of the world in history when carried into the historical form of existence. . . . A gulf opens between the world as it is and the world as it will be when it has been transfigured” (*Ibid.*, 453, 452). Isaiah attempts to bring the spiritual perfection of humanity into this world and fails to see the historical process of spiritual Exodus as a transfiguring movement—the possible fulfilment of which could lie only beyond death.

Voegelin does not criticize Isaiah exclusively on his own terms. Another standard is brought in to formulate his critique. Voegelin’s principle guide to the interpretation of political reality is not the philosophical politics of Plato and Aristotle; rather, it derives from the historico-spiritual politics

of Augustine and Schelling. Voegelin finds that Isaiah's counsel is dangerous because it is nostalgic and anachronistic. It hearkens back to a time when the Chosen People could have chosen to live under the spirit of Yahweh, but chose instead to go the way of the nations, competing against them for worldly power. Thus, a central point escapes the attention of Isaiah: it is already too late for Judah. It has a human king, thus breaking the *berith* with Yahweh. It has taken a decisive stake in the world, with all the political consequences that follow from this choice. Judah is not even in a position where it could remain relatively ambivalent to the exigencies of worldly government, for example, as is Jesus with respect to Roman taxation policies (Mt. 22:15-22). Isaiah's call for a general "return" is futile. "The present under God" has become "a suicidal impasse," Voegelin writes, when the Chosen People is conceived "as the institution of a small people in opposition to empires" (*OH I*: 356). In this situation, only a metastatic faith will make the call for return seem plausible. Voegelin commends King Ahaz for not capitulating to this semblance of piety (*Ibid.*, 483; *AR*, 68).

Voegelin is consistently critical of prophets who claim or imply that an intra-worldly fulfilment of human nature is possible. To be sure, he grants, the prophets know that the transformation of reality they desire cannot be brought about through human action; it must come to be through God's decisive intervention. But this supposition does not properly curtail their hopes for an immanent transfiguration of reality. Thus, Voegelin also rejects Hosea's apocalyptic vision of a transfigured future within historical time as "metastatic yearning" (*OH I*: 456). Such yearning cannot hold out, remaining unchallenged indefinitely; for the order of reality patiently resists the extreme measures of its impatient creatures: "the consciousness of passing, the presence of death in life, is the great corrective for futuristic dreams [of the metastatic variety]—though it may require a strong personality to break such dreams, once they have become a social power in the form of accepted creeds" (*Ibid.*, 482-3).

Voegelin finds this strength of personality in Jeremiah. He writes: "Jeremiah indeed returned from the metastatic vision of the future to the experience of the untransfigured present." Moreover, his return did not have to break completely with Isaiah, according to Voegelin's dialectical reading of the Isaianic writings. Jeremiah accepts and expands one of the lessons he learns from his predecessor: "the order of society in history is reconstituted in fact through the men who challenge the disorder of the surrounding society with the order they experience as living in themselves" (*Ibid.*, 483). At last, Voegelin finds the consciousness of a break with collective existence "contracted into the existence of the Jeremiah who enacted the fate of the people while carrying the burden of the Anointed." At last, "[t]he great motive that had animated the prophetic criticism of conduct and commendation of the virtues" is "traced to its source in the concern with the order of personal existence under God" (*Ibid.*, 484, 485). With the clear differentiation of his soul as a personal existence under God, however, Jeremiah becomes neither a philosopher nor a Protestant individualist. Instead, he inaugurates what Voegelin calls the "existential" phase in the prophetic concern with a future Messiah. Jeremiah inherits the symbol of the Messiah from his predecessors but changes it significantly, based on the "new" order of his personal existence. Amos (*ca.* 750) and Hosea (*ca.* 745-35) had sought the Messiah in the restoration of institutional order, Isaiah in a metastasis of reality itself (*Ibid.*, 474-5).²⁶ In its third and final phase, what Voegelin calls the "messianic problem" is reduced by Jeremiah to the representative existence of one man who will rise from the House of David. Deutero-Isaiah resumes the symbolic work of Isaiah and Jeremiah, and prophesies the future Messiah as a Suffering Servant (*Ibid.*, 482, 491ff.).²⁷ But it takes the better part of five centuries before a small band of Jews finds this Servant in Jesus (*Ibid.*, 515).

²⁶ For the dates of Amos, Hosea and Isaiah, see *OH* I: 312.

²⁷ "Deutero-Isaiah" is a modern convention that Voegelin accepts to designate the unknown author of Isaiah 40-55. The author is thought to have flourished in the middle of the sixth century B.C.E. (*OH* I: 491, 482).

Christian Revelation

Voegelin does not develop a substantial account of Christian eschatological symbols in the period of his differentiated historiography, even though they inform his entire notion of historical progress. At most one finds brief statements contrasting the soteriological truth of Christianity with the anthropological truth of Greek philosophy. The specific difference between the Greeks and Christians is said to lie in the symbolization of grace, where God is experienced by Christians as one who “bends” toward the human soul. Voegelin writes: “The 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.” The insights of the philosophers, relying only on the “unseen measure” of right conduct, were “confirmed” and “fulfilled” with the incarnation of Christ, the revelation of “the measure itself.” In this sense, Voegelin writes cryptically that “the fact of revelation is its content.” This means that the historical fact of revelation is the new experience of grace through Christ. Voegelin himself does not explain this phrase. Instead, he says that this conception of revelation, “as well as . . . its function in a philosophy of history,” is more fully elaborated in H. Richard Niebuhr’s *The Meaning of Revelation* (NSP, 78, n. 5). Surprisingly, however, Niebuhr does not use this language in any of the passages cited by Voegelin. But Schelling does.

At several places in his *Philosophy of Revelation*, Schelling speaks of the historical “fact” and “content” of the “visible” measure of truth, the incarnation of Christ.²⁸ Moreover, as discussed previously, Schelling also thinks that Christ has the same “function” in a philosophy of history. But

²⁸ Cf., Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung*, Werke II,3: 185, 196f., 377.

Voegelin has comparatively little to say about what constitutes Christian truth as “the maximum of differentiation.” He says only that “Christianity has concentrated [Hellenistic] demonism into the permanent danger of a fall from the spirit—that is man’s only by the grace of God—into the autonomy of his own self, from the *amor Dei* into the *amor sui*.” Christianity gains the insight that “mere humanity, without the *fides caritate formata* [formative faith of God’s love], is demonic nothingness” (*Ibid.*, 78-9, 79). The proper order of loves in an individual life cultivates that which allows one to progress from the predominance of self-love to love of God. But this is only the beginning of the salvation from nothingness promised by Christian symbolists, which leads Voegelin to characterize their type of truth as “soteriological.” Ultimately, the historical “function” of Christianity is to reveal that the human desire for salvation “will find fulfillment in transfiguration through Grace in death” (*OH III*: 364). To understand this notion properly in a philosophy of history would require an account of how Christ’s incarnation, resurrection and ascension can be understood potentially to redeem all of humanity. But Voegelin remains silent on these points during the period of his differentiated historiography, that is, for nearly two decades. Instead, he assumes the superior truth of Christian soteriology and begins to elaborate some of its consequences for the philosophy of history.

Voegelin argues that Christianity has endowed Western thinkers with a properly philosophical understanding of the historicity of human consciousness: “There is a strict correlation between the theory of human existence and the historical differentiation of experiences in which this existence has gained its self-understanding. Neither is the theorist permitted to disregard any part of this experience for one reason or another; nor can he take his position at an Archimedean point outside the substance of history. Theory is bound by history in the sense of the differentiating experiences” (*NSP*, 79). In historical existence, “reflective analysis, responding to the pressure of experience, will render symbols increasingly more adequate to their task. Compact blocks of the

knowable will be differentiated into their component parts and the knowable itself will gradually come to be distinguished from the essentially unknowable. Thus, the history of symbolization is a progression from compact to differentiated experiences and symbols" (*OH* I:5). Christian theology lifts historical studies "to the ultimate border of clarity which by tradition is called revelation." It was not simply the symbols that changed with the advent of Christianity. Rather, even the "complex of experiences" in pagan mythology and philosophy "was enlarged by Christianity in a decisive point," *viz.*, the point of grace or friendship with God (*NSP*, 79, 77).

This is an important summary. The notion of an historical progression from "compact" to "differentiated" symbols remains a constant throughout all of Voegelin's later work. It constitutes the basis for his claim that "soteriological truth" is superior to, though cannot do without, its anthropological and cosmological predecessors. The language of "compact" (=potential) to "differentiated" (=actualized) truth in history is also one of the distinctively Schellingian themes in Voegelin's historiography. This is certainly not an obvious claim. Thus far, Voegelin has not mentioned Schelling in a favorable light. His differentiated historiography is written during the time when he is most critical of Schelling.²⁹ However, once again in a private correspondence from this period Voegelin acknowledges that his historical philosophy is guided by Schelling. In a little-known letter to Alfred Schütz, Voegelin says that "the differentiation of these experiences [of transcendence]. . . is a historical process—the theogony in the sense of Schelling."³⁰ The notions of compact and differentiated symbols, history as the "process" in which this transfiguration of reality occurs, and Christ as the cornerstone of historical meaning are Schellingian features that one

²⁹ *Cf.* Chapter 1, § 2.

³⁰ Letter from Voegelin to Schütz, dated 7 November 1949, quoted by Helmut R. Wagner, "Agreement in Discord: Alfred Schutz and Eric Voegelin," in *The Philosophy of Order*, *op. cit.*, 85. Voegelin also mentions the Schellingian theogony in *From Enlightenment to Revolution* (1975), though without specific reference to the language of compact and differentiated experiences in history (*FER*, 12).

finds in all of Voegelin's later historiography.

The importance of Christian symbols to Voegelin's historical project, and their lack of substantive analysis, prompted Alfred Schütz to complain that Voegelin takes his stand "wholly on Christian doctrine." This, at least, is how the matter appeared to him after reading *The New Science of Politics*. Schütz summarizes his interpretation: "Every fall from the Christian faith involves gnosis of either the intellectual or the emotional form or of that voluntaristic form that you subsequently discuss so very instructively and skilfully."³¹ Voegelin responds to Schütz sympathetically: "I agree that my position concerning Christianity is too sketchily presented and that the formulations might give rise to misunderstandings such as, for example, that I am trying to defend Christianity and that I condemn all that is not Christian." Voegelin attempts to convince Schütz that his concern with Christianity "has no religious grounds at all."³² Rather, he maintains that his concern is motivated by the simple fact that philosophical historians have tended to overlook, inadmissibly, the 1500 years of Christian thought between antiquity and the rise of modernity. "Whatever one may think of Christianity," Voegelin writes, "it cannot be treated as negligible. A general history of ideas must be capable of treating the phenomenon of Christianity with no less theoretical care than that devoted to Plato or Hegel."³³

It would appear that Voegelin's concern with Christianity is based uniquely on his desire to understand the order of history in a manner acceptable to philosophical scientists. Responsible historians must interpret the vast field of Christian symbols, rather than simply overlooking it due to anti-Christian biases. Voegelin expresses appreciation for the intellectual gains that come with Christian thought, especially its emphasis on historical "degrees in the differentiation of

³¹ Letter from Schütz to Voegelin, dated November 1952, in *The Philosophy of Order, op. cit.*, 443.

³² Letter from Voegelin to Schütz, dated 1 January 1953, *ibid.*, 449.

³³ *Ibid.*, 449-50.

experiences." This point allows Voegelin to formulate "a principle of philosophizing": Philosophers must include in their interpretations of history "the maximally differentiated experiences," so long as they wish to be "operating rationally." They do not "have a right" to base their interpretations on more "compact types of experience while ignoring differentiation, no matter for what reason. . . . Now with Christianity a decisive differentiation has occurred," the revelatory experience of God's grace.

Voegelin elucidates the Christian experience of grace by contrasting it with Plato's parable of the cave (*Republic* VII). Plato, it seems, did not know who "forced" his prisoner to turn around (*periagoge*) in order to be "dragged" up to the cave entrance and the light of the sun. "It is this 'forcing' that in essence is differentiated in Christian 'revelation' or grace as the experienced intrusion of transcendence into human life. . . . This is new," Voegelin writes to Schütz.³⁴ Furthermore, he praises the Christian distinction between the spiritual and political realms,³⁵ and explains in greater detail why, "as a philosopher," he is "not inclined to throw Christianity overboard." He distinguishes between "essential Christianity" and "the gnosis of historical eschatology" in "certain texts in Paul" and *Revelation*. Voegelin anticipates that "[n]ot everybody will like this distinction. The sectarian movements and certain trends within Protestantism insist that eschatological Christianity is the essential one, while what I call essential Christianity is for them the corruption of Christianity by the tradition of the Catholic church." Voegelin's "essential Christianity" is based on two "Pauline compromises." First, with the later Paul, it does not proclaim "that the world will end tomorrow and that social order is therefore entirely irrelevant." Second,

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 450. A similar understanding of the parable is reproduced in *Plato and Aristotle*. "To be sure," Voegelin writes, "the Platonic *periagoge* has the overtones of conversion; but no more than the overtones." "[T]he philosophers authority. . . will be superseded by the revelation of spiritual order through Christ. The order 'by nature,' thus, is a stage in the history of order; and a theory of order in the Platonic sense requires for its systematic completion a philosophy of history" (*OH* III: 115, 96).

³⁵ Letter from Voegelin to Schütz, dated 1 January 1953, in *The Philosophy of Order*, *op. cit.*, 451.

essential Christianity understands “the faithful living in eschatological expectation [to be] the historical *corpus Christi mysticum*.”³⁶ The essence of Voegelin’s Christianity is therefore mystical. It seeks a “critical clean-up” through the process of “radical symbolization” that begins with Eckhart and leads through “the great mystics up to Cusanus.” Voegelin appreciates this movement and, as in Schelling’s dismissal of orthodoxy, shows no concern that his thoughts are “untenable from the Catholic standpoint and would have to be classified as a variant of that Modernism which has been condemned as a heresy.”³⁷

This private correspondence contains Voegelin’s clearest and most detailed account of Christian symbols from the period of his differentiated historiography. It reveals the source of the ambiguities encountered thus far. In private, Voegelin is a Christian mystic, like Schelling, whose thought is beyond the “religion” of the churches. His account of “essential” Christianity resembles Schelling’s distinction between “esoteric” Christianity, with its “inner” history, and the exoteric teaching of the churches. In his published works, however, Voegelin attempts to write “a philosophical inquiry concerning the order of human existence in society and history” (*OH I*: xiv; also *OH II*: ix). This tension between the historical mysticism of Christianity and the empirical mysticism of classical philosophy accounts for his curious treatment of “cosmological” societies and

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 452, 453.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, 456, 457. Voegelin also discusses four specific points in Christian doctrine, which he takes to be historical advances over cosmological myth and Jewish revelation. I can only mention these here: (i) Christology “reduced to its essence and made humanly universal” the “experience of divine help,” which was “symbolized in all pre-Christian civilizations polytheistically and in national pluralism” (454); (ii) the doctrine of the Trinity properly transformed Christianity from monotheism to “trinitarianism,” thus allowing it to account for (a.) divine transcendence, (b.) divine “intervention reaching into ‘nature,’ the superimposition of a *forma supernaturalis* in human nature upon the Aristotelian *forma naturalis*,” and (c.) the presence of the spirit in the Church (454-5); (iii) the Mariological dogmas of *Maria co-redemptrix* and *Maria mediatrix omnium gratiarum* stress the need for human “participation in the work of salvation” (455); (iv) Dionysius Areopagita and Thomas Aquinas attain a “critical understanding of theological speculation and its meaning,” which culminates in the insight that theological language rests on an “*analogia entis*, i.e. the recognition that theological judgments are not judgments in the sense of statements about the content of the world,” but are simply analogous to these (455f.).

his hesitation to decide between classical philosophy or Christian faith as the best account of spiritual order in historical existence. While acknowledging his “sketchy” treatment of Christian symbols in the *New Science*, Voegelin could not interpret them further in the early volumes of *Order and History* without breaking the chronological order of his historiography.

The original plan for his great work was to progress in the following manner. First, an analysis of ancient Near Eastern civilizations, ordered by the “cosmological myth,” was to serve as “background” material for understanding the emergence of the world’s first consciously historical civilization: the constitution of ancient Israel in representative experiences of transcendental revelation. Second, an analysis of ancient Greece, with its mythic and tragic forms of order, was to serve as background material for the emergence of transcendental philosophy in Plato and Aristotle. Third, the ecumenic expansion of Near Eastern empires was to be analyzed with a view toward understanding the rise of Christianity and its flowering in Medieval civilization. Finally, a second volume on specifically Christian types of order was to analyze the Protestant Reformation with a view toward understanding the contemporary crisis of Western civilization, *i.e.*, the breakdown of Christianity as a public cult and the forgotten historiography that once supported the supremacy of its truth. Six volumes were planned in total for *Order and History* (*Cf.* *OH* I: x-xi). However, the two volumes concerned specifically with Christian symbolism never appeared. Voegelin published the first three volumes, leading up to his treatment of Christianity, and then publication stopped on this project. It took seventeen years before the fourth volume of *Order and History* appeared.

2. THE ANAMNETIC TRANSITION: REMEMBERING PLATO AND ARISTOTLE

Anamnesis (1966) is the most important work that Voegelin published between the third and fourth volumes of *Order and History*. It is a transitional work, leading toward the equivalent historiography that begins to emerge in his latest period. In *Anamnesis*, Voegelin begins to elaborate

three of the most important changes in his understanding of history and consciousness; these are taken up further in *The Ecumenic Age*. First, he realizes that genuinely historical consciousness does not begin with its experience and symbolization in ancient Israel. "Historiogenesis," Voegelin's term for the unilinear construction of historical order from a divine-cosmic origin to an author's present, is also found in the earlier societies of Mesopotamia and Egypt. Other societies before Israel used historiogenetic speculation in the attempt to support the experience of a divinely sanctioned order in the present. Voegelin continues to claim that these societies were ordered by the "compact" myths of the cosmos, but he realizes the need to abandon the conventional account of their "cyclical" historiographies. For example, in *The Sumerian King List* (ca. 2050 B.C.E.), a text that Voegelin had examined before (Cf. *OH I*: 21-7), he now finds the author tracing a line of order from the first king, the god Enlil, to the human king of the author's present. This movement from divine to human order greatly resembles that which is found among Israelite historiographers. Thus, considered in light of his philosophy of history, the Israelite effort no longer appears to Voegelin as a completely novel form of historical consciousness; it continues and adapts the earlier historiogenesis that it also found among its neighbors (*Anam*.^{GER}, 79-116). The second change conveyed by *Anamnesis* breaks another convention that Voegelin had presupposed in his earlier work: the distinction between "natural reason" in classical philosophy and "divine revelation" in Judaeo-Christianity. Voegelin discovers that Plato and Aristotle, among others, understood *noesis* (contemplative reason) to be constituted by experiences of divine revelation, and they described these experiences with equivalent terms for what Christians call Grace. Finally, this notion of experiential "equivalents" is the third change in Voegelin's thought that is introduced by *Anamnesis*. In addition to the breakdown of the reason/revelation distinction, it gives Voegelin the intellectual means effectively to abandon his earlier distinction between anthropological and soteriological types of truth. These modes of symbolization become experiential "equivalents" that Voegelin must rework into his later

historiography. His attempt to rethink the process of history takes the general form of critical comparisons between classical philosophy and Christian theology. Accordingly, the rest of this chapter will focus on how Voegelin relates the “equivalents” of classic philosophy and Christian theology to his account of history as a spiritual progression of truth.

In *Anamnesis*, Voegelin describes the *Symposium* as the *locus classicus* for Plato’s awareness that reason is constituted by experiences of divine revelation. Voegelin’s focus on the *Symposium* is new. He did not interpret this dialogue in the “Plato” section of *Order and History* III, and it was only mentioned briefly in the *New Science*. Now Voegelin interprets at least part of the dialogue, the concluding speech on *eros* that Socrates relates from Diotima, and discovers the awareness of revelatory consciousness in this representative text of classical philosophy.

When Socrates describes *eros* as “a very powerful spirit,” one of several mediating between (*metaxy*) the human and the divine,³⁸ Voegelin takes this description to indicate the experience of mutuality between humanity and divinity—precisely the mutuality that he formerly acknowledged only in Judaeo-Christian experience and symbolization. Voegelin also finds an historical component in Plato’s symbolization of *eros*. It reveals to him, and ostensibly to Plato as well, an historical sequence in levels of consciousness moving through three types of human beings: the mortal (*thnetos*) of the Homeric past, the spiritual man (*daimonios aner*) of the present, and the “complacent ignoramus” (*amathes*) or spiritual dullard who resists the representatively human degree of “philosophical experience” in Socrates. Voegelin writes: “As we reflect about the sequence of the three types, there emerges the field of history which is constituted by the event of philosophy. For the man who through philosophical experience enters into the tension of differentiated knowledge about the order of being recognizes, not only himself as the new type of the *diamonios aner*, but also

³⁸ Cf. *Symposium*, 202e-203a.

the man who still lives compactly in the cosmic primary experience, as the historically older type. Further, once the humanly representative level of differentiating experience has been attained [in Plato-Socrates], no way leads back to the more compact levels" (*Anam.*, 128, 129). Plato allegedly knows that the emergence of erotic philosophy in Socrates constitutes a before and after in history from which there is no return to the level of consciousness attained, for example, in Homer's compact understanding of humanity as "mortal." Platonic *eros*, on Voegelin's account, is an experience of immortalizing "tension" toward the divine—the fulfillment of which lies implicitly beyond death (*Ibid.*, 130).

From this brief characterization it appears as though Plato was an Augustine *in potentia*. Voegelin clearly has Augustine in mind, though he does not make the connection explicitly. He interprets Platonic *eros* as an immortalizing practice of dying with intimations of historical consciousness, and implies that what was lacking in Plato can be found in Augustine. Voegelin concludes the chapter with what he calls "the great principle of a material [*i.e.*, general] philosophy of history [*das große Prinzip einer materialen Geschichts-philosophie*] that we owe to an insight of Augustine" (*Enarrationes in Psalmos*, 64.2):

He begins to leave who begins to love [the *daimonios aner*]
 Many the leaving who know it not [the *thnetos & amathes*],
 for the feet of those leaving are affections [*eros*] of the heart:
 and yet, they are leaving Babylon [the world and death](*Anam.*^{GER}, 279-80; *Anam.*, 140).³⁹

Voegelin commends Augustine for beginning to generalize the "affections of the heart" beyond Plato's restricted focus on Socrates' particular experiences in Athens. Augustine effectively broadens individual experiences of affection for the divine and reinterprets them as the spiritual Exodus of faithful humanity from the world (Babylon). He properly understands "the historical

³⁹ This Augustinian passage also appears as a guiding principle for historiographic interpretation in Voegelin's unpublished "Configurations of History" (1968), *CW* 12: 105f.; and *The Ecumenic Age*, *OH* IV: 178.

processes of exodus, exile, and return as figurations of the tension in being between time and eternity" (*Anam.*, 140). Augustine's generalized account of the meaning of love in historical differentiation was limited, according to Voegelin, only by the horizon of historical materials available to him at the time. This means that the details of Augustine's historiography can no longer be followed, due to the expansion of historical knowledge in recent centuries, but the principle he discovered remains valid for Voegelin. It becomes the principle that equates historical study with the search for immortality in spiritual Exodus from "the world" of death. This principle may have guided Voegelin's earlier interpretation of the Exodus in Israelite symbolization; it certainly guides all of his later historiography.

Voegelin does not make the connection more explicit between Plato's *eros* and Augustine's "affections of the heart" because he thinks that Plato's consciousness was more compact than Augustine's. He says that Plato's historical consciousness remained bound to his particular circumstances. Plato did not generalize the Socratic experience of *eros* in order to become a philosopher of world history, even though the potential for such generalization can be found in his work: "The inklings of a material philosophy of history, which are in principle present in Plato's work, did not immediately lead to further attempts to explore and survey the field of history as a whole." Plato lacked "critically validated comparative materials" from older cultures in the Middle East and Far Eastern contemporaries. Unlike Voegelin, Plato did not feel the need to develop "philosophical concepts" for the "theoretical mastery of such materials," because he simply did not have them. Thus, unlike Voegelin, he could not see the generally human presence of *eros* as the spiritual mode of Exodus, the immortalizing salvation of humanity from the world. Voegelin suspects that Plato could have become a philosopher of world history if he had access to the historical materials available to Voegelin, for such an "unfolding" of history's order "would have been possible at any given time." But Plato's thinking remained bound to the concrete Athenian

struggle between philosophy and sophistry (*Ibid.*, 137, 138).⁴⁰ To be sure, Voegelin does not describe Plato's struggle with sophistry as an idiosyncratic problem. He maintains that the desire for intellectual clarity receives its dynamism "always from contemporary situations of struggle." Augustine also struggled with Manicheans, Aquinas with Muslims, and Voegelin continues to struggle with modern philosophies of history attempting to make the "immanent" reason or will the impetus of historical progress (*Ibid.*, 137-8). Nonetheless, an important implication remains in Voegelin's treatment of Plato and Augustine: some rise above their struggles better than others. For Voegelin, Augustine rose above his contemporary crises better than Plato.

Perhaps this is why the central figure in *Anamnesis*—Voegelin's only book with a distinctively Platonic title—is Aristotle. Voegelin's earliest 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.*, 147-74; *Anam.^{GER}*, 287-315). 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* (mind) is not translated as "reason" in this essay, it is evident that Voegelin's concern with *noesis* should be considered as an account of reason. In a contemporary discussion, Voegelin says: "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

⁴⁰ Voegelin is certainly correct when he says that Plato did not become a philosopher of history in the Christian style. The reasons for this will be discussed when I interpret Voegelin's account of Plato's historical consciousness in *The Ecumenic Age*. However, the supposition that Plato's understanding of *eros* remained bound exclusively to Socrates' experience is simply erroneous. One reason for this mistake may be found in Voegelin's misinterpretation of an important Platonic myth on the subject: that which is conventionally called the "myth of Er" at the end of the *Republic*. In his earlier interpretation of the myth (*OH* III: 54-62, 129-34), Voegelin correctly notes that the protagonist of the tale, Er, is described as a "Pamphylian." This means that he represents the man "of all tribes"; he is "an Everyman." But Voegelin fails to notice that in Plato's Greek the protagonist's name is not Er, as most English translations have it, but *Eros* (*Cf.*, *Republic* 614b). Accordingly, the myth attempts to articulate what everyone desires to know about the human soul in matters of life and death.

of such a ground, hence reason is the ground of existence for man" (*Conversations*, 4). In *Anamnesis*, Voegelin's nearly exclusive focus on Aristotle should come as somewhat of a surprise. Aristotle was singled out in Voegelin's earlier work as the chief representative of "anthropological truth." Voegelin interpreted Aristotle as one who gained an impressive understanding of order in human existence, both in its personal and social dimensions. But Aristotle, among others, was found to be lacking in soteriological consciousness; he did not know how humanity could be saved from the world's disorder and death, and he even declared that friendship (*philia*) between humans and the divine is impossible. Furthermore, elsewhere Voegelin charged Aristotle with curiously transforming the Platonic experience of transcendence with an "intellectual thinning-out" of the "fullness of experience which Plato expressed in the richness of his myth" (*OH III*: 276). Aristotle lacked the degree of spiritual sensitivity needed for a proper interpretation of Plato's philosophical myths. Why does Voegelin now turn favorably to Aristotle? It would seem that Aristotle's *Metaphysics*, a text that Voegelin had not analyzed in *Order and History III*, now provides him with a suitably subtle terminology with which to begin his own analysis of *noesis* in historical perspective.

Voegelin's textual analysis begins by focusing on the experiential beginning of noetic insight. "In the experience and language of Aristotle," Voegelin argues, "man finds himself in a condition of ignorance (*agnoia, amathia*) with regard to the ground of order (*aition, arche*) of his existence." Aristotle also knows that one would not be able to perceive one's own ignorance in this way if one were not already "in the throes of a restless urge to escape from ignorance (*pheugein ten agnoian*) in order to seek knowledge (*episteme*)." That is to say, "whoever is perplexed (*aporon*) and wonders (*thaumazon*) is conscious (*oetai*) of being ignorant (*agnoein*)" (*Anam.*, 148; *Meta.*, 982b18). It is the recognition of one's restless ignorance that breaks forth into questions concerning the "where-from?" and "where-to?" of all that exists. These are the questions that guide the

philosopher's search (*zetesis*) for the ground of existence. The search is not completely blind, therefore, but carries with it the knowledge of ignorance. It is a "knowing questioning and questioning knowledge [*wissendes Fragen und fragendes Wissen*]" (*Anam.*, 148; *Anam.^{GER}*, 289). Otherwise said, in order to ask a question one must already have some sense of the direction or goal to which the question is leading. Nonetheless, Voegelin notes that one's questioning "still may miss its goal (*telos*) or be satisfied with a false one." Apparently, the search is in need of more guidance: and "[t]hat which gives direction to the desire and thus imparts content to it is the ground itself [*der Grund selbst*], insofar as it moves man by attraction (*kinetai*)" (*Anam.*, 148-9; *Anam.^{GER}*, 289). The philosopher's initially dim awareness of that which transcends existence is what initiates the restlessness in the soul and guides the search. The "answer" to the search is then symbolized by the "divine ground." It would seem that the mind is restless until it rests in God. Indeed, the Aristotelian experience of *noesis* begins and ends with the divine ground moving the entire process in the philosopher's questioning consciousness.

Voegelin cautions that the experience of noetic tension toward the ground "may be interpreted but not analyzed into parts." He then interprets the entire experience retrospectively: "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." Voegelin's reference to the divine ground as that which moves the soul "by attraction" indicates that he now acknowledges mutuality in Aristotle's experience of *noesis* as a divine-human encounter. He writes: "Aristotle adds [*überbaut*] 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; *Anam.^{GER}*, 290). Aristotle adds this symbol, *metalepsis*, to

the efforts of pre-Socratic thinkers, and mutual participation between divine and human reality becomes one of the distinguishing features of Platonic-Aristotelian philosophy, according to Voegelin.⁴¹ But such intimacy seems to indicate that the line between humanity and divinity, mortals and immortals, has become significantly blurred if not erased outright. Voegelin addresses this problem. He says that it originates in a terminological ambiguity from Aristotle's text.

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*]" (*Ibid.*; *Anam.*^{GER}, 290).⁴² Here is the source of the difficulty. Voegelin attempts to solve the problem by recalling its historical context. Aristotle gives the divine and human *nous* the same name, Voegelin argues, because in his thinking "synonymity of expression means equality of genus by genesis." The phrase "by genesis" is decisive for understanding Aristotle properly. Voegelin contends that Aristotle's thinking is still in the process of detaching itself from mythic symbolism (*Anam.*, 149). But it is not altogether clear whether Voegelin understands Aristotle to be leaving behind Homer's myth of the cosmos or Plato's myth of the soul. The former possibility seems more plausible (*Cf. ibid.*, 206, 68): the genesis of human *nous* from divine *Nous* closely parallels the demiurgic fashioning of *nous-in-psyche-in-soma* (mind-in-soul-in-body) in Plato's *Timaeus* (30b; 37a). Voegelin cites two passages from the *Metaphysics* in order to substantiate his point: "Each thing (*ousia*) will be created through that which is of the same name"; and "The thing which communicates the synonymity of the other things is comparatively the highest thing of this type" (*Anam.*^{GER}, 290;

⁴¹ Voegelin equates Platonic and Aristotelian terms for "participation"—*methexis* and *metalepsis*, respectively. See "Immortality" (1965), 89; and "Reason: The Classic Experience" (1974), *Anam.*, 103.

⁴² Voegelin's "*Seinsgrund selbst*" is clearly a reference to Aristotle's Unmoved Mover, that "which moves without being moved [ὃ οὐ κινούμενον κινεῖ]." In one of his more Platonic moments, Aristotle responds clearly to the question of how the Prime Mover can move the human soul without being in motion itself: "it causes motion as being the object of love [or the beloved, ἐρούμενον], whereas all other things cause motion because they are themselves in motion" (*Meta.*, 1072a25, 1072b4).

Meta., 1070a4ff., 993b20ff.).⁴³ Voegelin refers to these passages in order to reveal the continuing importance of mythic symbols even after Aristotle's *noesis* has afforded consciousness the ability to articulate its own structure. According to Voegelin, "synonymity," "genesis," and "mutual participation" are mythic symbols that Aristotle allows to enter his exegesis of noetic consciousness. Mythic symbolization "ingresses into the noetic exegesis because the noesis egresses from the myth, as it interprets its logos [structure, inherent order]." The continuing presence of mythical symbols does not signal a "methodological derailment" on the part of Aristotle, Voegelin maintains. Rather, it reveals simply "the residue of prenoetic knowledge of order and the background without which the noetic knowledge of order would have no function" (*Anam.*, 152, 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." *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." It differentiates the intra-cosmic 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." *Noesis* cannot simply replace the mythic truth of order. It "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.*, 150, 206, 134).

Voegelin does not credit Schelling with helping him to understand why philosophers should not depreciate mythic thought. Instead, he turns to a parenthetical remark in the *Metaphysics*, the

⁴³ Voegelin makes his own translations of Aristotle's Greek. I have translated Voegelin's German, and thereby broken with Niemeyer's English translation of *Anamnesis*, since Niemeyer ignores Voegelin's German translations of Aristotle's Greek (*Cf.*, *Anam.*, 149).

same passage that I found interpreted by Schelling,⁴⁴ and credits Aristotle with recognizing that the pre-philosophic lover of myth, “the *philomythos*,” was also something of a lover of wisdom, a *philosophos*; for myth and philosophy are both expressions of the “wondering” (*thaumazein*) by which “[a]ll people are equally excited” (*Ibid.*, 157; *Meta.*, 982b18ff.).⁴⁵ All people, even the most ancient mythologists, participate in the same movements of consciousness when they search for the “where-from?” and “where-to?” of their existence. “When Homer and Hesiod trace the origin of the gods and all things back to Ouranos [Heaven], Gaia [Earth], and Okeanos [Ocean], they express themselves in the medium of theogonic speculation, but they are engaged in the same search of the ground as Aristotle himself” (*Ibid.*, 93; *Meta.*, 983b28ff.). The experience and symbolization of noetic consciousness does not change the order of human consciousness substantially, Voegelin suggests, but makes it more explicit as an experience of participation in the divine ground. *Noesis* lifts the reality of participation “into the light of consciousness.” But such 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 philosophers 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).

⁴⁴ Cf. *supra*, 238.

⁴⁵ Voegelin’s “all people” translates the opening words of the *Metaphysics*. Aristotle writes: “All humans 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” (*Meta.*, 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*.” Clearly, “[i]f this sentence were torn out of its noetic context,” Voegelin admits, “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]. . . . It, 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).

Despite this high praise, Voegelin knows that Aristotle did not have an unqualified love of myth. The classic philosopher accepted some of the wonders of myth but rejected others. He accepted the opinions of the fathers (*patrios doxa*), for example, that the heavenly bodies are divine, but rejected the notion of the gods' human or animal form as an invention to help the people speak of gods, which should now be abandoned (*Meta.*, 1071b1-15). Voegelin interprets: "The philosopher thus eliminates the *thaumasia* [wonders] of the polytheistic myth but retains the knowledge of the *philomythoi* [lovers of myth] about the divinity of the ground. He clearly grasps the difference of the grades of truth between the primary experience of a cosmos full of gods and the noetic experience for which the divine is the ground of the cosmos and of man" (*Anam.*, 158).

This is an important insight for Voegelin. He takes it to be "the first steps toward a theory of equivalent symbols and experiences" ("EESH," 125f.). That is to say, Aristotle takes the first steps toward a philosophy of history that does not have to reject the cosmological myth of the past as completely false. Voegelin knows that "Aristotle's name does not conjure up in our time the figure of a philosopher of history." But he stresses that "his analysis of the temporal flow in consciousness as the dimension in which noesis recognizes itself as the presence of truth and, at the same time, the myth of the past, is a philosophical accomplishment about history that has not been surpassed until today." Aristotle knows, Voegelin implies, that profane history is meaningless. Rather, meaningful history is to be found only in "the inner dimension of consciousness of desire and search after the ground." What is more, since all people experience this inner dimension of desire, "the field of history is always universally human, even if only a relatively small sector of the philosophers' position would be materially [generally] known. The human universality of the desiring and searching participation in the ground results further in the equivalence of the symbolisms in which the consciousness of the ground is expressed."

By “equivalence” Voegelin means to say that “all experiences of the ground are in like manner experiences of participation [in a universal structure of reality], even though they may considerably differ from each other on the scales of compactness and differentiation, of finding and missing the ground.” The notion of “equivalents” should not be misunderstood, therefore, as Voegelin’s liberal editorializing of historical symbols. He is certainly not attempting to reduce all expressions of reality to modern notions of “value neutrality.” Rather, one might say that Homeric myth and Platonic-Aristotelian philosophy are equivalents only in a categorical sense: within a homogeneous medium of reality they both express a common search for the ground. They are equal in kind, even though they differ considerably in the degree of clarity they attain with respect to the relations of order they symbolize. Yet their differences are not sufficient to allow later generations to become proud of their historically superior insights: “The equivalence of the symbols thrown up in the stream of participation. . . leads to the loving turning back to the symbols belonging to the past, since they express phases of that same consciousness in the presence of which the thinker finds himself” (*Anam.*, 158, 158-9).⁴⁶ Aristotle catches sight of the universally human desire for the ground which, according to Voegelin, Plato tended to overlook in his distracting focus on the refutation of sophists. But Voegelin does not proceed with his analysis by discussing the reasons why Aristotle also neglected to develop a universal philosophy of history. Instead, Voegelin turns to determine the point at which he must diverge from Aristotle “in the historical situation of our time” (*Ibid.*, 159).

⁴⁶ For Voegelin’s elaboration of the notion of equivalences of experience and symbolization in history, see “EESH,” 115-33. Schelling also uses a notion of equivalent experiences to interpret different versions of the Egyptian symbols for Isis, Osiris and Typhon. He says that the inner experience is where one may find the similarity which underlies the different, external representations of these figures (*Cf.*, *Philosophie der Mythologie, Werke* II,2: 369-71). But Schelling does not develop this insight explicitly as a theory of “equivalents,” perhaps because it is already presupposed in his account of natural potencies differentiating in the successive periods of history.

The central difficulty that Voegelin finds in Aristotle's noetic philosophy is his lack of concern for clarifying the distinction between humanity and divinity. This distinction becomes "fuzzy," according to Voegelin, in Aristotle's description of enthusiastic experiences of "mutual participation." Voegelin translates the central text for this problem as follows: "Thought (*nous*) thinks (*noei*) itself through participation (*metalepsis*) in that which is thought (*noeton*); for it (*i.e.*, thought, *nous*) becomes that which is thought, as it grasps (*thigganon*) and thinks (*noon*), so that thought and that which is thought are the same. Thought (*nous*) is that which can grasp (*dektikon*) reality (*ousia*), or that which is thought" (*Anam.*^{GER}, 308; *Anam.*, 167; *Meta.*, 1072b20-22).⁴⁷ As revealed by his parenthetical remark, Voegelin understands this passage to describe the human *nous* in search of the divine as its *noeton*. He blames Aristotle for his ambiguous description of the *metalepsis* and finds it to be "no accident" that Hegel could use this statement "as the great peroration of the *Encyclopedia*"—a "gnostic-dialectical speculation" that attempts to reveal the reflective identity of the human and divine Spirit (*Anam.*, 167-8).⁴⁸ Aristotle, it seems, did not

⁴⁷ Once again I have translated Voegelin's German, including his parenthetical remarks, which the English translator has ignored. Voegelin writes: "Das Denken (*nous*) denkt (*noei*) sich selbst durch Teilnahme (*metalepsis*) am Gedachten (*noeton*); denn Gedachtes wird es (sc. das Denken, *nous*), indem es ergreift (*thigganon*) und denkt (*noon*), so daß dasselbe sind Denken und Gedachtes. Denn das, was Gedachtes oder Realität (*ousia*) ergreifen kann (*dektikon*), ist das Denken (*nous*)" (*Meta* 1072b20-22). This translates Aristotle's Greek: "αὐτὸν δὲ νοεῖ ὁ νοῦς κατὰ μετάληψιν τοῦ νοητοῦ· νοητὸς γὰρ γίνεται θιγγάνων καὶ νοῶν, ὥστε αὐτὸν νοῦς καὶ νοητόν." In the Aristotelian context, it is not at all clear that the symbol *nous* refers here to the human mind. On the contrary, since this remark occurs in a section where Aristotle is attempting to describe the perfect activity of the divine mind, which humans enjoy only occasionally, the *nous* may indeed be the God and the human mind its "object of thought" (*noeton*). This suggestion makes better sense of the context: Aristotle is clearly attempting to describe the priority of the divine to the human mind.

⁴⁸ Voegelin's reading of the Aristotelian passage improves when he returns to address it in his later essay on "Reason: The Classic Experience" (1974). Voegelin writes: "When read in the Aristotelian context, the sentence articulates the dynamics of sameness and difference of the knower and the known in the act of noetic participation, the joy of momentary sameness with the divine notwithstanding. When read in the context of the *Encyclopaedia*, the sentence expresses the beginnings of a philosophical enterprise that has been brought to its successful conclusion by Hegel. For in the Hegelian conception, philosophy begins as the 'love of wisdom' in the classic sense and moves from this imperfect state toward its consummation as 'real knowledge' (*wirkliches Wissen*) in the System. From the classic participation in the divine *nous* it advances through the dialectical progress of the *Geist* [Spirit] in history, to identification with the *nous* in self-reflective consciousness." This work, however, Voegelin considers to be merely an "eristic" trick of "speculative magic" by which Hegel reveals himself to be in revolt against reality as divinely constituted, *Anam.*, 108-09; *CW* 12:

anticipate the radical incarnational thinking of a Hegel. He thus left his noetic philosophy open to the abuse of later thinkers.

Despite this difficulty, Voegelin's return to classical philosophy has afforded him a number of important insights for his own historiography. First, he finds the consciousness of revelatory experience to have been the constitutive experience of *noesis*. This discovery allows him to bring the classical philosophers into the orbit of what Schelling called "revealed religion." Schelling also granted that reason in Plato and Aristotle—and the level of consciousness attained in the Mysteries—could be understood as a revelation analogue. But Voegelin appears to go further. He summarizes the discovery in terms suggesting the equivalence of classical *noesis* and Christian experiences of divine grace: "Out of a comprehensive complex of knowledge, 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' [Plato's *periagoge*] from being lost in the world toward inclination to the ground." Voegelin emphasizes that this differentiation affords "knowledge." Hence, trust in the knowledge that comes from concrete experiences of "love" will yield a "*cognitiones fides*," a faith based on cognition gained in the experience (*Ibid.*, 184). The movement away from being lost in the world of death is symbolized by the relative immortality of Plato's *metaxy*. This movement is experienced consciously by the "spiritual man" (*daimonios aner*). This middle-ground of consciousness becomes, for Voegelin, the site in which history itself is constituted as an immortalizing process of the divine ground in human consciousness (*Cf. ibid.*, 124, 132-3).

Shortly after the publication of *Anamnesis*, Voegelin begins to acknowledge that Aristotle also spoke of *noesis* as an immortalizing activity. He takes Aristotle's symbol for "immortalizing"

284-5. For Voegelin's elaboration of his Hegel critique see "On Hegel: A Study in Sorcery," *CW* 12: 213-55.

(*athanatizein*) from a passage in the *Nicomachean Ethics* (1177b30-1178a).⁴⁹ Voegelin translates the passage as follows: "The life of the intellect (*nous*) is higher than the human level; not in virtue of his humanity will a man achieve it, but in virtue of something within him that is divine. . . . Nor ought we to obey those who enjoin that a man should have man's thoughts and a mortal the thoughts of mortality, but we ought to immortalize (*athanatizein*) as much as possible and do everything toward a life in accordance with the highest thing in man" ("Immortality" [1967], 87-8). According to Voegelin, both Plato and Aristotle discover that human consciousness is not simply mortal, as Homer had allegedly thought. It is not just slipping back into what Anaximander called the Unlimited (*Apeiron*) but exists in a state of tension between mortality and immortality, time and eternity. This tension, and especially its accent on the immortalizing pull on consciousness, becomes the central focus in Voegelin's latest historiography.

3. THE EQUIVALENT HISTORIOGRAPHY: DEVELOPMENTAL HISTORY REVISITED

In light of Voegelin's reassessment of classical philosophy, one would expect his historiography to change considerably. *The Ecumenic Age*, volume four of *Order and History* (1974), announces a "break" in Voegelin's general conception of the project. His description of this change is potentially confusing. On the one hand, he says that nothing was inherently wrong with the way the project was originally conceived. There were indeed advancing insights into divine and human reality, "leaps in being," which marked epochal changes in human consciousness and civilizational order (*OH IV*: 1, 2). On the other hand, he says that something was quite wrong with the original program: "When I devised the program I was still laboring under the conventional belief that the conception of history as a meaningful course of events on a straight line of time was the great achievement of Israelites

⁴⁹ This is the passage that I found footnoted by Schelling, *cf. supra*, 238 n. 99.

and Christians who were favored in its creation by the revelatory events, while the pagans, deprived as they were of revelation, could never rise above the conception of a cyclical time." Voegelin acknowledges, for the first time to his English readers, that the "cyclical" convention "had to be abandoned" when he discovered historiogenesis in other civilizations. Indeed, Voegelin found historiogenetic speculation to be "a millennial constant in continuity from its origins in the Sumerian and Egyptian societies, through its cultivation by Israelites and Christians, right into the 'philosophies of history' of the nineteenth century A.D." (*Ibid.*, 7).

The original project also had to be abandoned when Voegelin found revelatory experiences articulated by classical philosophers. In *The Ecumenic Age*, he becomes even more explicit with respect to the revelatory nature of classical *noesis*:

The openness, in all directions, of consciousness toward the reality of which it is a part. . . is the joyous willingness to apperceive a reality that is informed by the same Nous as the psyche—that is all. But that is considerably more than is conventionally realized. Under the title of "reason," or the theologically condescending title of "natural reason," this constitution of the psyche once achieved is so much taken for granted that its origin in a theophanic event has passed from public consciousness. Substantially, this oblivion has been caused by the theologians' eagerness to monopolize the symbol "revelation" for Israelite, Jewish, and Christian theophanies.

To correct this situation, Voegelin emphasizes that the life of reason in classical philosophy is "firmly rooted in a revelation." He complains that this point is "conventionally anesthetized" by philosophical historians who report only "the philosophers' 'ideas' without touching the experiences that have motivated them." This practice must not be allowed in a philosophical study of order, Voegelin now contends. The "philosophers' theophanies must be taken seriously. The questions which the revelatory experiences impose must not be dodged, they 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?" Voegelin contends that, "[u]nless we want to indulge in extraordinary theological assumptions," the God of classical

philosophy is identical to the God of Judaeo-Christian theology (*Ibid.*, 236, 228-9).

Clearly, a substantial revision of the historiography is in order, and Voegelin knows it. He begins to emphasize his earlier point that the order of history has no philosophically defensible meaning—no *eidos*. He reproduces the dictum of Karl Löwith that he first mentioned in the *New Science*: there is no abstract meaning of history, but only meaning *in* history. And he complains that the “final answer to the meaning of history has been given not once but several times too often.” Consequently, Voegelin adds, “[t]here would be no sense in adding one more ‘meaning of history’ to the more than enough that we have, pretending that the new one at last will be the right one” (*Ibid.*, 214). He even sympathizes with the critical points against “philosophies of history” that were raised by Jacob Burckhardt in his 1868 lectures *On the Study of History*. Burckhardt criticized progressivist constructions of history’s order that prevailed in his time. He maintained that the construction of a philosophy of history reveals only “our profound and most ridiculous selfishness.” The truth of this claim will be understood, Burckhardt continues, when it is acknowledged that “[e]verybody considers his own time to be, not one of the many passing waves, but the fulfillment of time.” Voegelin commends Burckhardt as “one of the rare modern historians who has faced the issue and analyzed it” (*Ibid.*, 193). Voegelin also praises Kant for a similar observation. Kant had noticed, in the eighteenth century, that progressivist histories reduce people of the past to the status of mere “contributors” to the glorious present; and he also realized that progressivists unwittingly reduce themselves to the status of being mere contributors to some other mistakenly glorious present in the future (*Ibid.*, 325-6, 224; also *OH II*: 4).⁵⁰

⁵⁰ Voegelin does not mention the text from which he takes this account of Kant’s understanding of historical progress. However, his reference to the “cosmopolitan” realm of reason (*OH II*: 4), toward which Kant thought the order of history to be progressing, indicates that Voegelin has in mind Kant’s *Idee zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht*. Kant writes: “It remains strange that the earlier generations appear to carry through their toilsome labor only for the sake of the later, to prepare for them a foundation on which the later generations could erect the higher edifice which was Nature’s goal, and yet that

Thus, it would seem that, recalling the programmatic statement with which *Order and History* was introduced, Voegelin no longer thinks that the "order of history" will emerge from critical studies on the "history of order." Voegelin seems to have arrived at a considerably different understanding of what historical studies can achieve: "The process of history, and such order as can be discerned in it, is not a story to be told from the beginning to its happy, or unhappy, end; it is a mystery in process of revelation" (*OH IV*: 6).

In fact, however, this is not Voegelin's last word on the order of history. Appearances notwithstanding, he still claims to know a great deal about history's order; and he even concludes his study by attempting to add one more meaning *of* history to the "more than enough" that he says we already have. Despite his clear awareness of some of the problems involved in such constructions, he begins to formulate what amounts to a new version of the old historiography.

He does so, first, by distinguishing between two dimensions of history. These dimensions are called "History I" and "History II." This procedure reflects the old distinction between profane and sacred dimensions of history, respectively. History I is described as a society's self-interpretation. It is the account of a society's greatness that usually draws upon historiogenetic speculation in order to reveal the divine legitimation of its present order. This self-interested history "is greatly cherished by the members of a society." It is typically used by imperialists who seek to establish a perfect realm of peace in the historical existence of an empire with ecumenic aspirations. The imperial attempt to find meaning in life, finally, is said to take the form of a "concupiscential

only the latest of the generations should have the good fortune to inhabit the building on which a long line of their ancestors had (unintentionally) labored without being permitted to partake of the fortune that they had prepared" (Prussian Academy edition of Kant's *Works*, Berlin, 1900-1955, Vol. VIII: 20). I have followed L. W. Beck's translation of this text, "Idea for a Universal History from a Cosmopolitan Point of View," in Immanuel Kant, *On History*, L. W. Beck, ed., (Indianapolis, 1963: 14). For an overview of this area in Kant's thought, see Emil L. Fackenheim, "Kant's Concept of History," in *The God Within*, *op. cit.*, 34-49.

exodus" toward worldly greatness (*Ibid.*, 173, 197). Thus, Voegelin's "History I" accounts for the dimension of worldly or profane existence described by Augustine as the concerns of the *civitas terrena*. Likewise, Voegelin's "History II" accounts for the dimension of spiritual existence symbolized by Augustine's *civitas Dei*. Voegelin says that History II is typically shunned by worldly societies. History II symbolizes the experiences that recall to one's attention the broader spiritual context of life and death, "the never quite repressible knowledge that all things that come into being will come to an end." The awareness of History II can be acknowledged either reluctantly or with joy. In the former sense, it can be expressed as one's "tragic consciousness" that civilizations exist only as parts of the greater whole in which empires rise and fall without permanent meaning. For example, on occasion of the Roman conquest of Carthage (146 B.C.E.), a proud moment for Romans on the level of History I, Polybius relates how general Scipio Aemilianus was seized by a moment of horror when he realized that some day the same doom might befall his own people (*Ibid.*, 173, 182, 132). The broader context of History II emerges in the consciousness of Scipio, and this realization is experienced as tragic by the imperial conqueror who would make all histories lead to Rome. Scipio suffers from having placed his trust in the self-interpretation of Roman society's greatness when he knows this to be limited by the spiritual order of reality of which Rome is only a part. But his suffering is an indication that he has begun to leave "the world" of conventional greatness and has turned to face the order that does not submit to human conquerors.

The emergence of History II need not be experienced as tragic, Voegelin argues. It may be embraced by those who learn to replace the "concupiscential exodus" of ecumenic conquerors with the "spiritual exodus" of philosophers, prophets and saints. That is to say, the search for imperial meaning, human unity and permanence in the world may be transformed into the expectation that human life can be perfected, and universal humanity united, only by God beyond death. Voegelin claims that this transformation sheds some light upon the general course of history, in which

“concupiscential exodus” (History I) is increasingly replaced by “spiritual exodus” (History II). He devotes considerable attention to explaining how this transformation initially comes about, and suggests that it constitutes the only meaningful sense of advance that can be sustained by philosophers of history. Accordingly, it needs to be examined in some detail.

“History I”: Expansion of the Spatial Horizon of Humanity—Profane History

In *The Ecumenic Age*, Voegelin focuses on the fact that the “spiritual outbursts” analyzed in previous volumes of *Order and History*, the “leaps in being” in Hellas and Israel, occur during a time of great civilizational crisis. They occur when the Persian, Macedonian, and Roman empires successively compete to dominate the one ecumene of humanity. Voegelin calls this time of imperial expansion the “Ecumenic Age,” a period of history extending roughly from the rise of the Persian to the fall of the Roman empire (*Ibid.*, 114). It was during this time, he argues, that the spatial horizon of humanity was pushed significantly close to its limits to reveal for the first time that the true boundary of humanity is a spiritual horizon that cannot be crossed in this life: the true horizon surrounding all of humanity is death. The suffering caused by the ecumenic wars becomes a significant factor in the discovery of divine transcendence and the notion that human perfection might lie beyond the true horizon of death. These insights allegedly emerge for the first time in human consciousness during the Ecumenic Age. They emerge in the works of ancient historiographers who reflect on the meaning of their suffering. Thus, drawing on their works, Voegelin formulates a general order of history, a “triadic unit of experience” that looks distinctively Schellingian: the concupiscential expansion of empires (=B) gives rise to spiritual outbursts (=A²), which are eventually synthesized by historiographers (=A³) who attempt to construct a meaningful account of conquests and spiritual outbursts in the historical contexts known to them at the time (*Ibid.*, 308). This “triadic unit” attempts to account for the unfolding of consciousness—from “compact” to “differentiated” degrees of clarity—during the Ecumenic Age and beyond (*Ibid.*, 314).

Voegelin's discussion of this development begins with a "compact" symbolism predating the onset of the greatest imperial expansions. He focuses on the changing meaning of the symbolic pair *oikoumene-okeanos* (habitation-horizon) in order to discuss this general transformation. He writes: "*Oikoumene* and *okeanos* belong together as integral parts of a symbolism which, as a whole, expresses a compact experience of man's existence in the cosmos." The word *oikoumene* (ecumene) symbolizes the habitat of human life in the cosmos. This habitat is defined by its horizon, symbolized by the word *okeanos*, the "great encircling" of the *oikoumene*. In its oldest-known usage, Voegelin cautions that the word *okeanos* does not refer to the ocean as a body of water surrounding the inhabited land. Rather, it is a mythical symbol for the widest possible horizon that encircles the habitat of humanity: *okeanos* symbolizes the encircling horizon of death. In the Mesopotamian epic of Gilgamesh, for example, "Gilgamesh is not yet the differentiated discoverer or conqueror in pursuit of the ocean as a spatial horizon, but still the mythical hero in pursuit of life beyond death. The waters he has to cross, in Tablet X, are not the Ocean. . . . in the sense of a border of the ecumene but the waters of death beyond the world of this life" (*Ibid.*, 202, 203-4 n. 16). These horizon-forming "waters" of death are also symbolized in Egyptian myths dating from the middle of the second millennium B.C.E., and this is still the "compact" meaning of the word *okeanos* when it is used in Homer's epics (eighth century B.C.E.). In Homeric usage, the *okeanos*

marks the horizon where Odysseus finds the Cimmerians and the entrance to the underworld of the dead (*Odyssey*, XI); it is the border of the *oikoumene* beyond which lie the Islands of the Blessed (IV, 56ff.). In the epics, thus, the *oikoumene* is not yet a territory to be conquered together with its population. The experience of the "horizon" as the boundary between the visible expanse of the *oikoumene* and the divine mystery of its being is still fully alive; and the integral symbolism of *oikoumene-okeanos* still expresses the In-Between reality of the cosmos as a Whole (*OH IV*: 203).

Voegelin notices that the meaning of the symbols changes drastically by the fifth century B.C.E. In Herodotus, he observes that the river *Okeanos* has become "the ocean-sea that surrounds the land mass of the ecumene and the mankind inhabiting it." The enlightened Herodotus, in his

Histories, complains that he is unable to find the Ocean and, according to Voegelin, "pours his scorn on the older conception: 'For my part I know of no river called Ocean, and I think that Homer, or one of the earlier poets, invented the name' (II,23)." Herodotus even laughs at those who continue to draw maps of a round earth completely surrounded by this imperceivable ocean-stream (IV,36) (*OH IV*: 204). The Ocean has thus become a fictional horizon, the ocean-sea a literal thing that can be crossed, and the ecumene a spatial land that can be conquered. The imperial search for the Isles of the Blessed, as a place on earth where humanity attempts to regain its lost unity through military conquest, is well under way.

Voegelin interprets the outcome of the ecumenic wars in a curious way. On the one hand, he criticizes the entire process as "concupiscential." The pursuit of ecumenic domination reveals itself to be a misdirection of *eros*, a fatuous attempt to attain the permanence of immortality in this life and to conquer the order of reality in which everything must die. Voegelin knows that this drive to conquer the ecumene was not exhausted by the failures to establish a world empire during the Ecumenic Age. It was simply restrained by "spiritual outbursts" in people who emphasized the impenetrable nature of the human horizon (=death). But the spiritual restraints of mystics and saints could not hold out against the worldly desires of imperial pragmatists. They eventually circumnavigate the globe in their attempts to conquer the ecumenic horizon and reach paradise in this life. But their attempts were always bound to fail: "If one tries [in spatio-temporal existence] to reach the *okeanos*, with its Islands of the Blessed and its entrance to the underworld, one returns to the point from which one started. The superb irony of the ecumene having the shape of a sphere that brings the concupiscential explorer of reality back home to himself, and of this sphere being situated in a cosmic horizon of infinite extension and duration, has hardly yet entered the consciousness of a mankind that is reluctant to admit concupiscential defeat." The concupiscential drive continues to this day, "and since it has become a bit silly to chase around the earth, one must

engineer round trips to the moon." One must even imagine "extra-ecumenes" to conquer in the infinite universe: "Hence, we live in the age of other worlds than our own, of invasions from Mars, and of flying saucers. Anything will do, as long as it puts off the confrontation with the divine mystery of existence." Voegelin argues that these and other more serious diversions from the reality of death are now more inexcusable than ever (*Ibid.*, 210, 211). Some cardinal lessons have been learned from the Ecumenic Age: "No imperial expansion can reach the receding horizon; no exodus from bondage is an exodus from the *condicio humana*; no turning away from the Apeiron, or turning against it, can prevent the return to it through death" (*Ibid.*, 215). In other words, space is not "the final frontier," as the authors of *Star Trek* would have it. The exploration of space is simply the latest manifestation of the "concupiscential exodus" that created the great suffering of the ecumenic age. The only difference between ancient and modern imperialism, Voegelin contends, is that moderns should know better.

Voegelin criticizes imperial expansions after the Ecumenic Age. However, he thinks that his ability to criticize them is determined by the fact that he lives in the time after ecumenic conquests failed to achieve human unity and permanence by crossing the *okeanos* only on this side of death. His critique of post-ecumenic imperialism is, therefore, historically relative; and this point undermines his ability to criticize imperialist expansions during the Ecumenic Age itself. The critique that he does provide is weakened by his supposition that the lust for domination needed to be exercised during the Ecumenic Age in order to reveal the spiritual nature of humanity's ultimate horizon. The sufferings of the Ecumenic Age reveal to Voegelin that "the concupiscence of conquest cannot reach the horizon beyond which lies the divine source of human universality, [and] from this very failure emerge mankind and its habitat as the site where the universality of man has to be realized in personal, social, and historical existence." Voegelin is almost thankful for the human misery and mass murder of conquest during the Ecumenic Age, because it offers a "spectacle of

meaningful advances," albeit a "nauseating" one, to later historians of the spirit. Indeed, the redemptive meaning that he attempts to take from this period is the discovery of world history itself. More specifically, developmental history eventually becomes the properly spiritual horizon (*okeanos*) that one must begin to cross in this life, through "spiritual Exodus," in order to anticipate one's salvation through grace in death. It is in the Ecumenic Age when the perfection of humanity is allegedly first sought beyond death. And a great deal of death was apparently necessary for this discovery. Voegelin writes that "history as the horizon of divine mystery that surrounds the spatially open ecumene can hardly emerge unless the [spatial] ecumene actually opens under the impact of concupiscential expansion, and the expansion is no more than a senseless rise and fall of peoples and their rulers unless the consciousness of the historians can relate the events to the truth of existence that emerges in the spiritual outbursts" (*Ibid.*, 208, 215, 313). Developmental historians become the saviors of meaning during great periods of civilizational crisis. They attempt to rise above the fray and pull some measure of order and peace out of the seemingly hopeless manifestations of chaos and destruction all around them.

In fact, however, the muted self-congratulation of developmental historians is one thing, but the meaning they attempt to derive from periods of senseless suffering is quite another, at least for philosophy. Voegelin's hesitation to criticize ecumenic expansions seriously is curious, because his own account of the "compact" symbol *okeanos* reveals that the horizon of humanity was already properly understood to be death, in Mesopotamian and early Egyptian societies, even before the period of ecumenic conquests. It seems that the failure of these conquests was not needed after all to induce the spiritual awareness of death as the true horizon of the *condicio humana*. The inescapable suffering caused by natural death and limited warfare appears to have been quite enough. Of course Voegelin's common sense would agree with these basic points. But his

agreement would likely be dialectical, and therefore ambiguous.⁵¹

Despite the ambiguity, there is a clear accent in Voegelin's account of this matter. He implies that the conquests actually confirmed what was only dimly known before by the "compact" symbolists of the ancient Near East. After all, their understanding of spiritual reality was insufficient to restrain the mad lust for conquest that emerged from their societies. Was it not? But this objection is weak. For neither did the "differentiated" understanding of spiritual matters in the twentieth century C.E. prove sufficient to restrain its lusts for domination. World Wars, genetic engineering in the search for immortality, and the expansion of the ecumene toward outer space all served to indicate that no progress has been gained if it cannot be known in advance that *Star Wars* are not needed to reveal death as the true horizon of all things in the universe. Of course, it is possible to know this point in advance, but it is also possible to know that this knowledge is not new. It does not come from a new self-revelation of being or the "beyond being" of God. It rather stands in continuity with the oldest knowledge of human existence, which was clearly known to the most perceptive symbolists in the earliest periods of history. For example, another author whom Voegelin discusses, also predating the Ecumenic Age, has formulated the same insight without the benefit of ecumenic suffering. Thus Anaximander (*fl.* 560 B.C.E.): "The origin (*arche*) of all things is the

⁵¹ This matter has been sensed by a recent interpreter of *The Ecumenic Age*. On the one hand, John Ranieri notes that, for Voegelin, "'phenomenal' [*i.e.*, pragmatic] events do not 'cause' differentiations of consciousness. Imperial expansion does not serve as an efficient cause, generating differentiations of consciousness." Nonetheless, he continues, "[i]f not the cause of differentiations, pragmatic events would seem to be [for Voegelin] at least a significant catalyst in their emergence. Voegelin acknowledged that certain levels of social, political, and economic achievement are more favorable to differentiation than others, but he did not develop this theme much beyond this observation. . . . We are left with an acknowledgment that there is some connection between pragmatic conditions and the development of [spiritual] consciousness, but the stratification of reality reflective of the 'double constitution of history' with which we have to contend makes it difficult to articulate what that connection might be." See John J. Ranieri, *Eric Voegelin and the Good Society* (Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1995), 234-5. It is true, Voegelin does not want to say that spiritual discoveries of divine transcendence were simply "caused" by the suffering from imperial wars of expansion. However, he does say that they were "induced" by these conquests (*OH IV*: 197). In addition, he clearly thinks that ecumenic expansion was necessary for historians to realize that humanity's ultimate horizon is death.

Apeiron [boundless] It is necessary for things to perish into that from which they were born; for they pay one another penalty for their injustice (*adikia*) according to the ordinance of Time" (*Ibid.*, 174). Voegelin's partial agreement with this basic truth has already been noted. But now one must consider the reason why he ignores it and turns to develop a philosophy of history that seeks to avoid the perishing of "all things."

Voegelin's developmental historicism places Anaximander in the "compact" period of human consciousness. Anaximander's symbolization of the *Apeiron* allegedly reveals that he lacked a properly differentiated consciousness of the symbolizing mind, not to mention its place in history: "What has not yet become articulate as an area of reality [for Anaximander] is the noetic consciousness in which the dictum emerges as the luminous symbol of reality." Voegelin makes this statement even though he knows that Anaximander's work exists only in fragments. This suggests a general problem in Voegelin's account of "compact" thinkers. It is not clear how he can suggest that the earliest thinkers had a compact understanding of spiritual reality when their works have survived only in fragments. Despite this difficulty, Voegelin would insist that the real problem lies deeper. Anaximander's understanding of the *Apeiron*, it seems, is insufficiently tensional or dialectical. More specifically, his extant writings reveal no consciousness of life as a "tensional" existence between the pulls of mortality and immortality. Humans rise mysteriously from the *Apeiron* and perish back into that from which they were born. That is all. But Voegelin is not content to rest with Anaximander's dictum, because he knows that experiences of "immortalizing" also arise in the Ecumenic Age. These experiences of "spiritual Exodus" within reality, of life lived in conscious tension toward the divine Beyond, begin to counter the concupiscential drive that tries mistakenly to realize one of the strongest human desires within this life: the desire for personal immortality.

“History II”: The Horizon Retracted and Mythically Crossed—Sacred History

Although History I (concupiscential exodus) and History II (spiritual exodus) have been separated for purposes of analysis, Voegelin argues that they are closely related in the Ecumenic Age. As the attempt to unify the ecumene through imperial conquest reveals itself increasingly to be malconceived, the spiritual outbursts “induced” by the suffering gradually gain social momentum. The notion of a transcendental fulfillment of human desires gradually becomes a more persuasive alternative to the failed attempts at achieving perfection in military campaigns. Eventually, “concupiscential exodus has to retract into the embarrassing consciousness of a non-ecumenic ecumene, of a limited unlimited.” Empire clashes with empire, fails to conquer the foe, causes more suffering than it alleviates, and increasingly resigns to live with the knowledge that its jurisdiction does not surround all of the known world. “The experience of this untenable result prepares the situation in which the ecumenic rulers become ready to associate their empire with an ecumenic religion, in order to channel the meaning of a spiritual exodus into a concupiscential expansion that has become flagrantly nonsensical” (*Ibid.*, 197-8).

Voegelin suggests that spiritual outbursts follow the failures of imperial conquests to cross the universal horizon that defines humanity in this life. Outbursts of the spirit allow the later prophets of Israel, Plato, Aristotle and others to begin crossing the horizon of death mythically. Deutero-Isaiah and Daniel have visions of a divinely transfigured reality in which life will ultimately be saved from perishing. Plato realizes that human existence is structured in-between (*metaxy*) the immortalizing pull of the divine *Nous* and the mortalizing counterpulls of the bodily passions. Aristotle realizes that *noesis* is the experience that best describes the consciousness of divine-human participation (*metalepsis*) in the immortalizing (*athanatizein*) nature of the mind itself. Finally, Aristotle also realizes that experiences of mutual participation between divine and human reality have long been present, though unawares, in the experienced wonders described by mythologists.

This realization allows him to interpret the mythological past with a measured degree of respect. Voegelin appreciates all of these insights. He even grants that they were precipitated by genuine theophanies. But they also remained compact, he argues. They lacked the freedom conveyed by later visions of a transfigured life in the Beyond, and remained bound to the necessity of life-and-death rhythms in the cosmos. With respect to the Greeks, Voegelin writes: "Man can immortalize only when he accepts the apeirontic burden of mortality. The balance of consciousness between the height and the depth, between Nous and Apeiron, becomes the balance of immortality and mortality in the *bios theoretikos*, in the life of reason in this world" (*Ibid.*, 237). One might suspect that this level of articulate consciousness suffices to account for all generally human experiences of the superlative reality under consideration. These experiences can be understood mythically, rationally, or through the "philosopher's myth." But Voegelin is not ultimately content with the insights gained by classical philosophy. He continues to think that, within his present epoch of consciousness, the supreme understanding of the immortalizing pull is still to be found in experiences of Christ's resurrection. This is the event in the Ecumenic Age that crosses the human horizon emphatically—this time, so to speak, from the side of divinity. This event is of singular importance to Voegelin. It guides the vision of later historiographers, in whose wake he continues to think and write; it constitutes the apex of differentiated historiographies, yielding their Before-and-After division *par excellence*; and it makes historiography itself a contemplative exercise of the spirit.

Surprisingly, however, Voegelin does not discuss the historical event constituted by witnesses to Christ's bodily resurrection. Instead, he writes a perhaps intentionally esoteric chapter on Paul's vision of "the Resurrected." Voegelin discusses only the spiritual or "pneumatic" aspect of Paul's experiences. He does not discuss the empty tomb and bodily resurrection stories in the Gospel narratives, nor the extent to which Paul himself struggles to account for the salvation of the body—presumably in accordance with the content of his vision. Voegelin's focus on Paul's spiritual

experience of the resurrection attempts to provide a philosophically persuasive interpretation of this event as an historical advance in theophanic visions and their symbolic interpretations.⁵²

Voegelin writes that “if any event in the Metaxy has constituted meaning in history, it is Paul’s vision of the Resurrected.” Be that as it may, the fundamental point in Voegelin’s reading of Paul needs to be emphasized. He takes Paul’s vision to yield only a spiritual insight into God’s creation, albeit the pre-eminent one in history. The vision does not change anything in the broader order of reality. Rather, it begins to “transfigure” human consciousness by making Paul

⁵² Voegelin’s focus on Paul’s spiritual experiences elicited passionate complaints from some of his Christian supporters. For discussion see Michael P. Federici, “Voegelin’s Christian Critics,” in *Modern Age* 36 (1994): 331-40; and James M. Rhodes, “Voegelin and Christian Faith,” in *Center Journal* 2 (Summer, 1983): 55-105. However, Voegelin’s reading of Paul also found support from other interpreters sympathetic to Christian theology. See Michael P. Morrissey, *Consciousness and Transcendence: The Theology of Eric Voegelin* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994), 101-06; “Voegelin, Religious Experience, and Immortality,” in *The Politics of the Soul*, Glenn Hughes, ed., (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999), 11-31; Geoffrey L. Price, “The Epiphany of Universal Humanity,” in *The Politics of the Soul*, 65-83; and Eugene Webb, “Eric Voegelin’s Theory of Revelation,” in *Thomist* 42 (1978): 95-110, reprinted in *Eric Voegelin’s Thought: A Critical Appraisal, op. cit.*, 157-77.

It is Morrissey, in *Consciousness and Transcendence*, who goes to the greatest lengths to excuse Voegelin for avoiding the Gospel accounts of the Resurrection. Morrissey contends that Voegelin’s “hermeneutical method” seeks to interpret experiences from literary texts written by the subjects of the experiences themselves: “Paul left writings that expressed his own experience; Jesus comes to us only through the mediating interpretations of other writers.” Thus, Voegelin interprets Paul, but ignores Jesus. Morrissey points to precedents in Voegelin’s interpretation of notable Greeks to substantiate his claim: Voegelin also ignored Pythagoras for a similar reason—he is known only through the writings of others—and focused on the fragmentary writings of Xenophanes, Parmenides, and Heraclitus. Thus, it seems that Voegelin can be excused for his curious choice of texts, based upon his “hermeneutical method.” But this defense is weak. First, Voegelin did interpret a great deal of Jesus’ sayings in an earlier essay, “The Gospel and Culture” (1971), *CW* 12: 172-212, in which he also avoids any discussion of the Resurrection appearances. Second, if he wanted to apply his “hermeneutical method” consistently, he could have interpreted the first-hand accounts of the bodily Resurrection experiences that are given in the Gospels, for it is impossible to prove that these writings are not genuine reports by eyewitnesses: one Gospel author even shows some level of concern for conveying a truthful account of these matters (*Cf.* Luke 1: 1-4). The author of Luke, in the book of Acts, also claims to relate Paul’s own words from his experience of the bodily resurrection, but Voegelin neglects to interpret these passages—without explaining how he could know that Paul’s experiences have not been accurately conveyed. Thus, if Voegelin had a “hermeneutical method,” he did not apply it consistently. It seems that he wants to avoid the Gospel accounts for another reason. Morrissey offers a second suggestion: “Revelation, Voegelin claims, does not tender information about the world.” Consequently, Morrissey suggests, “[t]hose who seek to locate revelation in miraculous events Voegelin would consider spiritually obtuse” (282, n.67). Be that as it may, the question is certainly not the “location” of revelation, but its content. It would seem that Paul’s experience differed in content from those described in the Gospels. Morrissey’s first defense is refuted textually; his second one, which amounts to an attempt to evade questioners, will be examined when Voegelin attempts to do the same.

representatively aware of an immortalizing process in reality that was only dimly known by his “equivalent” predecessors: Deutero-Isaiah, Daniel, Plato and Aristotle, among others. In Paul, the immortalizing process in reality has a distinctively personal character. Unlike the “immortalizing” of the Greeks and Jews, Paul claims to witness the transfigured perfection of an individual. His vision thus becomes representative for the personal immortality of all who are open to the divine spirit in the same manner as Paul. Voegelin translates and interprets a passage from Paul’s *Letter to the Romans* in support of this point: “If the spirit (*pneuma*) of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, then the God who raised Jesus Christ from the dead will also give new life to mortal bodies by means of the spirit indwelling in you’ (8:11). Faith in Christ means responsive participation in the same divine *pneuma* that was active in the Jesus who appeared in the vision as the Resurrected.” This immortalizing *pneuma* is itself not new to the order of reality. But the “divine irruption” in Paul is said to constitute a “new existential consciousness.” Its novelty is to be found only on the level of human consciousness, but this is sufficient to drive Voegelin’s differentiated historiography. He describes the symbolic contribution of Paul in a revealing summary:

In Paul’s myth [of death and resurrection], God emerges victorious, because his protagonist is man. He is the creature in whom God can incarnate himself with the fullness (*pleroma*) of his divinity, transfiguring man into the God-man (Col. 2:9). The whole creation that is groaning can be redeemed, because at one point, in man, the sonship of God is possible (Rom. 8:22-23). The [erotic, immortalizing] movement in reality, that has become luminous to itself in noetic consciousness, has indeed unfolded its full meaning in the Pauline vision and its exegesis through the myth. The symbolism of the man who can achieve freedom from cosmic Ananke [Necessity], who can enter into the freedom of God, redeemed by the loving grace of the God who is himself free of the cosmos, consistently differentiates the truth of existence that has become visible in the philosophers’ experience of *athanatizein* [immortalizing](*OH IV*: 243, 242, 246, 251).

Clearly, a distinctively Christian vision still provides the “maximum of differentiation” to which Voegelin alluded in his earlier historiography (*Cf.*, *NSP*, 79; *OH I*:132). But now he elaborates the matter in more detail. He describes three points to the “hard structure of truth” that come upon the

historical scene in the “mythopoetic genius of Paul.” These points reveal to Voegelin the extent to which Paul’s vision of “the Resurrected” transcends the “noetic revelation” of classic philosophy. First, Paul experiences the presence of the God who creates in radical freedom from the cosmos. Paul’s God is beyond the creative demiurge described by Plato in the *Timaeus*. His God is not limited by cosmological necessity (*Ananke*) in the creative process. Second, Paul’s vision reveals to Voegelin that reality itself is engaged in a process of immortalizing “transfiguration.” The vision takes Paul beyond the tensions of life and death in the cosmos and allows him to differentiate “the experience of the directional movement [in reality] by articulating its goal, its *teleion*, as the state of *aphtharsia* [immortality] beyond man’s involvement in the Anaximandrian mystery of Apeiron and Time.” Finally, and most importantly for Voegelin, Paul becomes conscious of the developmental character of history and articulates the new order in human consciousness where the transfiguration of reality “becomes luminous in its actual occurrence.” To Paul, “[t]he vision of the Resurrected is. . . more than a theophanic event in the Metaxy; it is the beginning of transfiguration itself.” Paul interprets his vision historically. He develops what Voegelin calls a “mythical” account of God’s history with the Chosen People, and “a new accent falls on the area of ‘history’ and its rank in the whole of reality” (*OH* IV: 250, 250-1, 248, 251). These points call for critical reflection.

First, Paul’s experience of God is said to have transcended the relatively compact theology of Plato. In Voegelin’s reading of the *Timaeus*, Plato attempts to write

an *alethinos logos*, a “true story,” of the Demiurgic presence of God in man, society, history, and the cosmos. This philosopher’s myth is carefully devised so as to make the tale of divine presence in reality compatible with the existential truth of man’s tension toward the divine ground. . . . Even the Platonic myth, however, is not yet fully differentiated; for Plato, though he established the truth of existence as the criterion for the truth of the myth, refrained from developing the criterion completely.

Plato was aware of an aspect of divinity beyond the Demiurge, Voegelin grants, but he “surrounded” this further experience of divinity with “deliberate uncertainties.” Accordingly, the “true story” in

the *Timaeus* “did not go beyond the figure of a Demiurge whose noetic efforts remained limited by Ananke,” the Necessity that resists a completely intelligible ordering of the world (*Ibid.*, 249-50). The central implication is this: Plato wrote cautiously of the unknown God, but revealed little to Voegelin that could be used in a philosophy of history.

Voegelin’s account of Plato’s historical consciousness is brief and unpersuasive. He claims that Plato was inclined to develop a progressive account of history’s spiritual order, but failed to do so because he lacked Paul’s experience of the unknown God revealed in Christ. Voegelin bases this claim on a fusion of two Platonic myths: the myth of the age of Cronos (*Statesman* 271d-272b), and the myth of the age of Nous (*Laws* IV). When taken together, these myths suggest to Voegelin the familiar theme in a differentiated historiography: the age of the god Cronos is superceded by the age of the god Zeus, which is finally understood by the age of the god Nous (Intelligence) (OH IV: 226-27). However, this construction is unpersuasive, because it is contradicted by other historical points made by the characters who tell the myths, and it is not clear that they represent the historical consciousness of Plato. Both myths are told in separate dialogues by characters named “Stranger.” Voegelin uncritically equates their speeches with Plato’s incomplete philosophy of history and ignores the passages contradicting his reading. To take an example from *Laws* IV, the speech during the age of Nous hearkens back fondly to the age of Cronos, when humans were ruled by daimons instead of other humans (*Laws* 713a-714b). It does not suggest that a new age of differentiated consciousness has dawned in which the compact past has been rationally transcended. Quite to the contrary, the Stranger does not claim that his experiences of Nous are new. He knows that the remote past is unknowable, and this knowledge qualifies all claims to novelty in his present. The myth pertaining to the origin of cities makes this point clearly. The Athenian Stranger says that “tens upon tens of thousands of cities” have come into being during the “infinite length of time” preceding the mythical account he sets out to develop (*Laws* 676a-c), so he does not suspect that his

account of the origin of cities improves upon anything else from the past. Indeed, he summarizes his lack of concern for historical progressions with an appeal to his inability to know the remote past: "What pertains to the ancients should be left alone and bid good-bye, and spoken of in whatever way is pleasing to the gods; but what pertains to our new and wise men must be accused, insofar as it is responsible for bad things" (*Laws* 886d). The ancients can neither be accused nor excused, for the remote past is unknown; and it is precisely for this reason that an historical philosophy of being—such as Voegelin attempts to develop—lacks persuasive grounds for its beginning. Despite Voegelin's construction of a three-phase philosophy of history in parts of the Platonic dialogues, Plato's Athenian Stranger seems to have been uninterested in historiography as a spiritual science.

Paul, on the contrary, claims that the unknown God was revealed to him in Christ (*Cf.* Acts 17:22-31), and he writes a good deal on the historical implications of the event. He thereby continues the historiogenetic type of thinking that Voegelin criticizes in others but supports in Paul. To be sure, Voegelin does not accept the truth of Paul's theophany uncritically. He takes it to be an historical advance, but he also claims that it created a "turbulence" in Paul—as does any theophany—which, however, left him particularly open to a rather serious distortion of reality as experienced. Paul's vision of "the Resurrected," according to Voegelin, caused him to expect that reality itself would be transfigured within his own lifetime, that Christ would return soon in the Second Coming and redeem all of creation from its mortality. Voegelin criticizes this expectation as "metastatic," and he commends Plato for not permitting such "enthusiastic expectations to distort the human condition" (*OHIV*: 252, 241, 239). Curiously, however, Voegelin does not criticize Paul for interpreting his theophany as a Christophany. For reasons that remain unexplained by Voegelin, Paul's vision of an immortalized human does not amount to a metastasis of reality in the soul of the visionary.

Voegelin is generally protective of Paul's vision, perhaps surrounding it with some "deliberate uncertainties" of his own. He constructs what amounts to a prohibition of questions surrounding the event: "The vision emerges as a symbol from the Metaxy, and the symbol is both divine and human. Any attempt to break up the mystery of divine-human participation, as it occurs in a theophanic event, is fatuous. On the subjective side, one cannot 'explain' the divine presence in the vision by a psychology of Paul. And on the objective side, 'critical doubts' about the vision of the Resurrected would mean that the critic knows how God has a right to let himself be seen" (*Ibid.*, 243). Voegelin's rejection of subjective psychologies is well taken. Appropriately, he will not have anything to do with unphilosophical speculation from those who would, for example, presume an intimate knowledge of Paul's psychic life and attempt to "explain" his vision as the result of a fit of epilepsy. But to shield the vision from "critical doubts" in what claims to be a philosophical study of order is disturbing. It resembles the "prohibition of the question" concerning the premises of an argument for which Voegelin frequently criticized Comte and Marx—in particular.⁵³ What is more, Voegelin does not interpret Paul on his own terms. He acknowledges that for Paul the vision is "more than a theophanic event in the Metaxy," but his interpretation limits it to the Metaxy nonetheless (*Ibid.*, 248, 243), and his decision to avoid discussion of the bodily resurrection appearances is clearly another manifestation of the same problem. Voegelin's own "critical doubts" or "deliberate uncertainties" pass by almost imperceptibly. I do not criticize the doubting Voegelin for assuming to know "how God has a right to let himself be seen," for this point is simply a *non sequitur* that obscures a more fundamental problem.

Hitherto, Voegelin's philosophy of history concentrated on experiences of a generally human character. He frequently appealed to the common well-spring of experience, symbolized by

⁵³ Cf., *FER*, 258ff.; *NSP*, 24, 140; *Science, Politics and Gnosticism*, 20-49; *Anam.*, 3-4; *OH IV*: 330.

Heraclitus' notion that the Logos is common (*xynon*) to all humans, making them like-minded (*homonoia*), and enabling mature men (*spoudaioi*) to discuss reality's order (Cf., *NSP*, 28, 66, 77, 64). But Paul's experience of "the Resurrected" obviously breaks with the common order of experience interpreted by philosophers, and Voegelin's acceptance of its historical significance tends to make his account of history's order philosophically unempirical. Paul's experience of "the Resurrected" is relatively idiosyncratic. And Voegelin encounters the same problems as Schelling when he attempts to use it as the basis for a universal philosophy of history. One cannot sympathetically recollect the "spiritual body" of the resurrected Christ as a blinding light experience in one's own past. One is not even expected to be able to do so by Christian teachings. Rather, one is expected, with the advocacy of the Holy Spirit, to trust vicariously in the experiences that God has allegedly given to others. Christian faith, therefore, is fundamentally based on vicarious experiences, while there is no such vicar in philosophy. This claim suggests a fundamental difference in the meaning of theophanic experience for philosophy and Christian theology. Christian faith is not based on the simple trust in God's ability to raise the dead. Rather, it trusts that this power of God has actually become manifest to a few select people in the resurrection of Christ. To place one's trust in this manifestation of God's grace necessarily forces one to leave behind the common order of human experience, in which bodily resurrections of the dead do not occur, and to base one's understanding of God's dealings with humanity on the idiosyncratic experiences of the Apostles. Such faith breaks with the universal order of human experience commonly interpreted and trusted by philosophers. And Voegelin's acceptance of it undermines the empirical basis of his historical philosophy.

Voegelin would likely wish to disagree. He attempts to bring the substance of Christian faith into the range of philosophical intelligibility as a common experience. For example, he writes in a rare autobiographical moment: "When reading the First Letter to the Corinthians, I have always

the feeling of traveling, with Paul, from *phthora* [perishing] to *aphtharsia* [immortality] in a homogeneous medium of reality, from existence in the Metaxy as a way station to immortality as a goal, with death as a minor incident on the road. Death is indeed reduced to ‘the twinkling of an eye’ in which reality switches from imperfection to perfection” (*OH IV*: 247). Voegelin may have felt that he was “traveling” while reading the letters of the saint, but the relevant question in a philosophy of history is whether or not he travels with Paul. Voegelin’s re-enactment of the experience does not resemble the miraculous events described by Paul. But Voegelin is clearly attempting to suggest that there is something universal in Paul’s vision which has philosophical relevance. To “travel” with Paul from perishing to immortality is to follow his interpretation of the experience as a saving “Tale.” Paul’s Tale is, according to Voegelin, a myth that recounts the developmental history of death and resurrection “to its end.” It is chiefly due to the historical consciousness that Paul uses to tell his Tale, I argue, that Voegelin is led to disregard “uncritical encumbrances” in the letters of the saint. It is while reading Paul that Voegelin formulates what amounts to a second programmatic statement for *Order and History*. He writes: “The truth of existence emerges from the theophanic events in history.” Yet this is substantially the same principle with which Voegelin opened his great work. The two statements are easily blended: “The truth [order] of existence [history] emerges from the theophanic events [order] in history” (*OH IV*: 251; *cf.*, *OHI*: ix). Despite all of the critical observations he continues to make with respect to the “order of history,” Voegelin continues to construct a developmental account of history’s order. The only change between the early and later historiographies is Voegelin’s increasing appreciation for the complexity involved in such constructions. But he does not reach the point where the entire enterprise is found to be theoretically untenable. Instead, he “travels”—ostensibly with Paul.

It is Paul who tells the sacred-historical Tale of salvation that Voegelin attempts to recount. In his vision of “the Resurrected,” Paul realizes that the transfiguration of mortal reality begins in

history and points to its trans-historical realization. This is the “spiritual Exodus” that Voegelin has been defending against the concupiscential exodus of ecumenic conquerors. Voegelin writes:

This understanding of the vision, however, is possible only if the experience of a reality which paradoxically moves toward the divine Beyond of its structure, if the movement of the psyche toward the divine depth, is pursued to the point at which existence under the conditions of *genesis* [birth] and *phthora* [perishing] is revealed as an event in the history of the divine Beyond. The Resurrection can be the beginning of transfiguration because it is revealed to Paul as an event in the tale of death he has to tell: “For as through one man came death, so now through one man comes the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all men die, so in Christ all men shall be made alive” (I Cor. 15:22-23) (*OH IV*: 248).

Voegelin understands the “homogeneous medium of reality” in which he feels Paul traveling toward immortality to be “the same medium of the myth in which the Fall of Adam occurs.” Paul sets up the *dramatis personae* in his myth, Adam and Christ, and recounts the history of salvation from Adam’s death to Christ’s life. His use of myth is said to resemble Plato’s: “When Paul goes beyond the analysis of reality in the perspective of the Metaxy, in order to interpret his vision of the Resurrected in the perspective of the divine Beyond that reaches into the Metaxy, he must, like Plato, resort to the symbolic form of the myth. Only in this medium can he tell the plot of the cosmic-divine drama that begins with death and ends with life.” Paul’s Tale progresses as follows:

In a first act (*aparche*), Christ is raised from the dead; then, when the *parousia* [Second Coming] has occurred, those who belong to Christ will be raised; then comes the end (*telos*), with Christ handing over his kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed the principalities (*arche*), authorities (*exousia*), and powers (*dynamis*); “and the last of the enemies to be destroyed is Death (*thanatos*)” (I Cor. 15: 26). All things having been subjected to Christ, then, the Son himself will be subjected to God, “so that God may be all in all” (28). The war with the rebellious cosmic forces ends with the victory of God (*OH IV*: 248).

Voegelin accepts the basic content of Paul’s vision, as well as the historiographic principle that Paul uses in its interpretation. The vision reveals to Voegelin the order of history, consciousness, and reality itself. Despite his numerous warnings against placing one’s trust in the “hypostasis” or reification of abstract concepts derived from experience, Voegelin reaches a number of abstract conclusions in his historiography. First, he says that “consciousness is not a constant but

a process advancing from compactness to differentiation.” In other words, it has a history in which it unfolds. Second, since the differentiating events in which it unfolds “are experienced as immortalizing movements, history is discovered as the process in which reality becomes luminous for the movement beyond its own structure; the structure of history is eschatological.” Third, reality itself is said to have an “eschatological structure,” and human consciousness is described as “the site of [its] transfiguration” (*Ibid.*, 305, 304, 312). Finally, Voegelin suggests that consciousness, history and reality have not ceased to unfold historically. They continue to bloom and may lead to the time of “universal humanity.” The unity of humanity was sought erroneously by imperial conquerors in the Ecumenic Age and more recently by utopian revolutionaries, but it will arrive only when God removes the horizon of death that no human efforts can abolish: “Universal mankind is not a society existing in the world, but a symbol which indicates man’s consciousness of participating, in his earthly existence, in the mystery of a reality that moves toward its transfiguration. Universal mankind is an eschatological index” (*Ibid.*, 305). This vision of the immortal eschaton tends to imbalance Voegelin’s thought in much the same way that it did Paul’s. It would seem that Voegelin has obtained a similar “assurance of immortalizing transfiguration” from his historiographic studies (*Ibid.*, 256); for he hesitates only briefly with respect to the other possibility that death might entail. He writes: “One could imagine a philosopher to create the symbol of a *perditio in nihilo* as the countersymbol to the *creatio ex nihilo*. But philosophers hesitate to let the *nihil* of the beginning become the *nihil* of the end, though there are exceptions” (*Ibid.*, 271). Voegelin mentions none of these exceptions by name, though one is readily found in Plato’s Socrates.

In the *Apology*, Socrates provides a more balanced account of the possible meaning of death. He says that death can be either one of two things: (1) some type of immortality, whether personal or impersonal, or (2) a dreamless sleep. What is more, he goes to some length to argue that neither

of these possibilities will result in something bad for a good human being (*Apology* 39e-42a).⁵⁴ Voegelin overlooks Socrates' account of death as a "dreamless sleep" in his reading of the *Apology* (Cf., *OH* III: 7-14). Consequently, he interprets Plato as a seeker of personal immortality. But Voegelin goes to greater lengths to explain why the pull of death cannot be thought to lead toward depersonalization:

The obvious reason is the fact that we have an "experience of reality" but no experience of the *nihil* other than the creative divine ground of reality or the fall into non-being as the sanction on non-participation in the divinely grounded and ordered reality. The movement that draws man into existential participation is a movement toward a more eminent degree of reality, not toward perdition; it is experienced as the *athanatizein* of the philosophers or the *aphtharsia* of Paul. The experience of reality, one might say, has a built-in bias toward more reality; the symbolism of a cessation of reality would be in conflict with the experience of the movement as an exodus within reality (*OH* IV: 271).

As indicated by my comments on the *Apology*, the "bias" toward immortality described in the preceding quote is Voegelin's; it is not to be found in an impartial study of the philosophers' "immortalizing."⁵⁵ Voegelin's comments about the "experience of reality" are also open to question. To say that it is impossible to experience "the *nihil*" is too restrictive. For example, recalling one of Socrates' basic points in the *Apology*, everyone can remember the nothingness of a dreamless

⁵⁴ The possibility that death might result in the end of one's personal existence is even mentioned seriously in the *Phaedo*, during Socrates' exuberant attempt to charm the fear of death out of Simmias and Kebes (91b; on Socrates as a fear-charmer, see 77e). The *Phaedo* is frequently cited for proof that Plato "believed" in the immortality of the soul. But this claim overlooks the pedagogical nature of Socrates' last conversation with his young friends and the balanced thanatology he develops with adults at the Athenian court.

⁵⁵ The supposition that Voegelin's comments are motivated by his desire for personal immortality can be supported textually. In an earlier work, Voegelin expresses an autobiographical sense of horror at "the nothing that makes us shudder with anxiety from the bottom of existence." He suggests that this horror is not based on a simplistic fear of death: "the anxiety of existence is more than a fear of death in the sense of biological extinction; it is the profounder horror of losing, with the passing of existence, the slender foothold in the partnership of being that we experience as ours while existence lasts" (*OH* I: 4,5). Voegelin seems to provide a more balanced thanatology in his 1967 essay "Immortality: Experience and Symbol" (*CW* 12: 52-94). He emphasizes the "metaxic" character of consciousness: "the life structured by death is neither the life of the mortals, nor the lasting of the gods, but the life experienced in the tension of existence. It is the life lived in the flow of [human-divine] presence. . . . [T]hat is all." But Voegelin concludes by sympathizing with "the more robust" who will not care about this "anemic immortality." He appears to want more, and says that this desire is "quite healthy" (*Ibid.*, 91).

sleep. And this, it seems, is neither an experience of the “creative divine ground” nor a punitive “fall into non-being.” It is something else for which Voegelin does not give an account. Instead, he focuses on the “immortalizing” nature of historiographic studies and chooses Paul as the most differentiated thinker to arise in the Ecumenic Age.

Voegelin’s discussion of Paul reveals a number of problems in his historiographic method. Strictly speaking, Voegelin does not interpret Paul on his own terms; he transforms part of his thought and uses it in the construction of a philosophy of history. He turns Paul into a mythologist, and Plato into an incomplete philosopher of history, thus obscuring the historical consciousness of both. He brings Paul closer to the “knowing myth” of Platonic philosophy and Plato closer to the developmental history of Pauline theology than the textual records will allow. Voegelin does not acknowledge this problem. He argues that the difference between Platonic-Aristotelian philosophy and Pauline theology is only accentual. Classic philosophy concentrates on the epiphany of structure in the cosmos, while Pauline theology concentrates on the epiphany of salvation from this structure. The difference between the classic and Christian theophanies is “not contradictory,” Voegelin maintains; it “does not compel a choice between alternatives. On the contrary, the two conceptions together act out, in the luminosity of consciousness, the paradox of a reality that moves beyond its structure” (*OH IV*: 258). The efforts of both classic philosophy and Pauline theology are welcomed as categorical “equivalents.” They are said to differ only in the decisive “accent” that Paul’s vision of immortality brings to the analysis (*Ibid.*, 246, 241). But the implicit conclusion is clear: classical philosophers understand how best to live with respect for divinity in the *civitas terrena*, while Paul is granted the superior cognition of faith in the *civitas Dei*—into which all of reality is being transfigured. These claims call for a closer look at the texts that Voegelin uses in his construction. Since his historiography turns decisively on Paul, I will limit my critical remarks to a brief consideration of Voegelin’s New Testament exegesis.

Upon closer inspection, it is not clear that Paul has a mythical understanding of his vision, nor of the theophanic history that he constructs to proclaim its superiority.⁵⁶ Paul, unlike Plato's Socrates, does not use the word myth (*mythos*) to describe his experiences, neither with respect to the first nor to the second Adam. He seems to interpret these men as historical figures. The word *mythos* is used only five times in all of the New Testament writings—each time critically, and never in any of the letters known to be from Paul's hand. For example, in I Timothy (4:7; also 1:4) the author contrasts "godless and silly myths [*mythoi*]" with a proper training in godliness (*eusebeia*), without suggesting that his readers could have recourse to any such thing as a godly or pious myth. In II Timothy (4:4), myths are said to be directly opposed to truth (*aletheia*). In Titus (1:14), readers are warned to stay away from Jewish myths told by men who reject the truth of Christ. Finally, II Peter (1:16) summarizes the point I wish to make. The author declares: "We did not follow sophistically devised myths [*sophizo mythoi*] when we made known to you the power [*dynamis*] and presence [*parousia*] of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses [*epoptes*] of his majesty." Clearly, the New Testament authors have a general distrust of myths, and Paul appears to share their distrust by not constructing any myths of his own. He does not even avail himself regularly of the closest parallel to mythic speech in the New Testament, *viz.*, the parable. Parabolic writing is used only in two parenthetical remarks in one Epistle (Heb. 9:9, 11:19). Consequently, Paul seems not to have distinguished between myth and actual experiences. A further indication of this point is suggested by the way that one of Paul's contemporaries responded to his account of the resurrection. After hearing Paul's account of his vision, in the presence of King Agrippa, Festus retorted: "Paul, you are mad [*Maine*]; your great learning is turning you mad" (Acts 26:24). Paul insists that he is

⁵⁶ For a sympathetic attempt to develop Voegelin's mythological reading of Paul, which also draws upon the understanding of myth in Claude Lévi-Strauss, see Hendrikus Boers, "Interpreting Paul: Demythologizing in Reverse," in *The Philosophy of Order, op. cit.*, 153-72.

not mad, that he is "speaking the sober truth" (26:25).

Voegelin distorts Paul's writings by interpreting them as myths. What is more, he attempts to blend Paul's visions with those of the other disciples. He claims that Paul was a man who "knew something about visions" and "classified [the other visions] as of the same type as his own (I Cor. 15:3-8)" (*OH IV*: 244). When one turns to the cited text, however, one discovers no such classification made by Paul. He lists several appearances of the resurrected Christ without saying that they were similar or dissimilar. The assumption of a homogeneous classification of resurrection appearances is Voegelin's. Furthermore, it is not clear that Paul himself thought of the resurrection only as a spiritual experience. He repeatedly refers to the bodily aspect of Christ's resurrection, even in some of the passages quoted by Voegelin (Romans 8:22-23; 8:11; *cf.* *OH IV*: 240, 242). Paul struggles to make sense of this aspect of his experience with the concept of the "spiritual body" (*soma pneumatikon*) (I Cor. 15:44, 55; *cf.* *OH IV*: 241). If Paul's experience of "the Resurrected" was only a spiritual insight, then it becomes unclear why he would wrestle with the awkward symbolism of the "spiritual body." What has become clear is that Voegelin downplays the bodily miracle that the early Christians took to be the Resurrection, seemingly in his attempt to make an esoteric historiography more palatable to the cultured despisers of Christianity in modernity. His reading of the New Testament has a distinctively apologetic feel.

Voegelin is normally careful to recover the self-understanding of the authors he interprets. His historiographic thought attempts to understand their respective levels of consciousness in order to describe the advancing epochs of history. But Voegelin's interpretation of Paul is uncommonly incautious in this respect; it ascribes a mythological consciousness to him that is lacking in the texts. This problem undermines the cornerstone to his entire philosophy of history: If Voegelin cannot interpret Paul on his own terms, then he loses the historical basis for his claim that reality has an "eschatological structure."

CONCLUSION

This chapter has provided a detailed account of Voegelin's differentiated and equivalent historiographies. I will conclude by reflecting on the different periods that Voegelin distinguishes in his historical thought. I will reserve concluding remarks on the Schellingian character of Voegelin's historiography for the general conclusion to my study.

Voegelin's developmental history differentiates epochs of experience and symbolization, allegedly rising to the maximal differentiation of consciousness in Christian Revelation. However, once he discovers revelatory experiences in some of the Greek philosophers, he begins to speak of the "equivalence" of Christian theology and Greek philosophy. One would expect this discovery to change his understanding of historical progress significantly, but no such change is evident in Voegelin's latest work. He begins to use different terminology, speaking of the "noetic" revelation of Greeks and the "pneumatic" revelation of Christians, but the notion of historical progress is retained. These terms continue to distinguish the Greeks and Christians, respectively, on the ascending scale described by his earliest historiography. Voegelin attempts to defend the notion of spiritual progress in his latest work by calling attention to the superior historical consciousness evident in Paul's "mythology," contrasting it with the "deliberate uncertainties" that limited Plato's. But in doing so he ascribes a false acceptance of myth to Paul and a false concern for history to Plato. These are the central exegetical problems that call Voegelin's project into question.

Some theoretical problems have also come to light in Voegelin's historical philosophy. In its latest version, Voegelin still presupposes too much knowledge about the remote past. He writes: "The great noetic and pneumatic differentiations do not occur among paleolithic hunters and fishers, but in ages of cities and empires" (*OH IV*: 306). But this is precisely what he cannot know about the remote past. A Socrates, Jesus, or someone better may have arisen many times in the prehistorical consciousness of humanity—without having a Plato or an Evangelist to give him

cultural immortality through writing. In addition, there may have been women thinkers who achieved equal or better accounts of human-divine order, but were not deemed worthy of cultural immortality by literate males. This point should not be mistaken for an attempt on my part to be *au courant*. Rather, it calls attention to another area of historical consciousness that forever eludes the philosopher of history: the experiences of women and illiterate men, by far the majority of humanity. Voegelin overlooks this problem. He claims that “[t]here are no Greek insights into the structure of reality apart from those of the philosophers in whose psyches the noetic theophany occurred; nor are there Israelite, Jewish, and Christian insights into the dynamics of transfiguration apart from the prophets, apostles, and above all Jesus, in whose psyche the pneumatic revelations occurred” (*Ibid.*, 270). This point is certainly true of the historical records, but it becomes questionable when considered as part of a general philosophy of history. It overlooks the facts that most people in a civilization are not writers, the work of most writers does not survive, and all of these people have consciousness and articulate experiences that would be relevant to a philosophy of history if they could be known. But when Voegelin constructs his philosophy of history he writes as though such problems do not exist. His historical thought is “monumental” in Nietzsche’s sense of the term.⁵⁷ Voegelin interprets famous authors in history and assumes a great deal about the rest of human consciousness in his attempt to fill in the blanks, taking the works of some famous authors to be “representative” of a much broader order of consciousness. I have suggested that this procedure cannot be legitimated in a philosophical study of order. But this suggestion does not constitute a fundamental break with Voegelin’s thinking. It draws upon the philosophical principles of order that Voegelin himself has graciously worked to recover in his philosophy of consciousness. Voegelin

⁵⁷ Cf., Friedrich Nietzsche, “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life,” in *Untimely Meditations*, Daniel Breazeale, ed., R.J. Hollingdale, trans. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 57-123.

repeatedly emphasizes that there is no vantage point—whether sacred or profane—outside of reality or its history from which the whole could be known philosophically. His arguments in the philosophy of consciousness supporting this point are persuasive, but he tends to forget his own better judgment when he turns to construct an abstract, progressive account of history's order. Returning to the concrete principles of his philosophy of consciousness, I am left to conclude that Voegelin's philosophy of history is perishing—"according to the ordinance of Time."

CONCLUSION: Voegelin's Participation in the "Schelling-Renaissance"

Voegelin studied Schelling in graduate school, under the supervision of Schellingian scholar, Othmar Spann. These studies left their mark on Voegelin, but it did not appear immediately. Voegelin quotes Schelling only as one authority among others in his German works from the 1930s, and he writes some four thousand pages of his *History of Political Ideas* before returning to Schelling and realizing that the entire project is theoretically flawed. After this re-reading of Schelling compels him to rework his *History*, Voegelin begins to depreciate Schelling's significance in the majority of his published writings. However, I have found that Schelling continued to be a primary guide for Voegelin's philosophical orientation throughout his career. I have drawn attention to substantial agreements between their works and have supported these with references to letters that Voegelin sent to colleagues during the time when he was most critical of Schelling. Thus, despite the appearance created by Voegelin's published criticisms of Schelling, I have found substantial agreements between their conceptions of order and history.

Order

Schelling's identity-philosophy is the substantial basis for Voegelin's philosophy of order. Schelling argues that the order of human consciousness is constituted by its unconscious, luminous depth (=B). He claims that this depth is substantially identical to the divine substance of the universe—"the All." In accordance with this supposition, he claims that the phenomenal truths perceived in reflective types of philosophy and the natural sciences cannot be taken as absolutes. They are relatively subjective and incomplete when compared to the substantial objectivity gained in contemplative reasoning. To realize that thought and the substance of the universe are identical before reflection is to know the only objective truth available to human consciousness—the law of

identity (A=A). This knowledge provides the universal measure in thought with which Schelling is able to dismiss particular claims either to matter or spirit as the fundamental substance of the universe. He does not have to choose between matter or spirit as the primary substance, because both are thought to be substantially identical in the living process of the All.

Voegelin's description of the world as a "charmed community" in which all the "partners in being" are substantially identical ("consubstantial") suggests that the Schellingian identity-philosophy he supported in his 1943 letter to Alfred Schütz continues to guide his anthropological thinking in *Order and History*. Nothing in Voegelin's later work perpetuates the *proton pseudos*. He does not assume that phenomenal differences between things in the world reflect substantial differences in reality. I have provided textual evidence in support of how he accepts this claim. But it is further supported by the facts that (1) Voegelin never retracts his published acceptance of Schelling's "ontology," the *Potenzenlehre* described as "process theology" in the German *Anamnesis*, and (2) his latest critique of ego-based identity-philosophy (*Identitäts-philosophie*) cannot be said to have the mature Schelling in mind as one of its targets. Schelling's "ontology" seems to have been chiefly responsible for allowing Voegelin to understand, criticize and transcend the "phenomenalism" that passed for substantial philosophy among many of his contemporaries.

History

Schelling's account of how the divine substance of the All unfolds in human consciousness is the substantial basis for Voegelin's developmental conception of history's order. Schelling's historical philosophy argues that all of the divine potencies of nature become actualized in human consciousness throughout successive periods of history. They do so within a substantially permanent order of reality. He acknowledges no substantial changes in human nature or the divine throughout the entire process of history. He discusses only formal changes that occur in reflective consciousness. The same potencies are presupposed as the constituents of the humanity that

undergoes both mythological and Revelatory types of experiences. The potencies simply manifest different patterns of actualization, thus yielding different accents on nature or its Beyond as the source of order in the discernable epochs of God's self-revelation to humanity. Schelling finds "mere revelation" among the initiates of the Mystery religions in ancient Greece and among the prophets of Israel even before Christ becomes "visible" as the "real" principle of the "mediating potency." Thus, Schelling's historical philosophy effectively begins to weaken the ecclesiastical distinction between natural reason and divine revelation. The order of history manifests itself, he argues, in a progression from natural to supernatural types of revelation, symbolized by the transition from mythological to revealed types of religion. The distinction between reason and revelation is not explicitly overcome by Schelling, but it is weakened nonetheless. The extent to which his historical philosophy draws upon his *Potenzenlehre* is greatly responsible for this. Its focus on the substantial identity of human-divine reality provides an initial basis for understanding a broad range of religious experiences as symbolic equivalents for one another. Accordingly, one could interpret his historical thought by accenting its different elements, yielding either an equivalent or a differentiated historiography. But its central weakness is not easily resolved by the skills of an interpreter.

Schelling encounters considerable difficulties in his attempt to demonstrate the universal progression of human consciousness throughout history. He presupposes that the divine potencies should become actualized simultaneously throughout the entire nature of human consciousness, that when "God's nature" unfolds all world mythologies should be effected in the same way, thus producing equivalent symbols for substantially equivalent experiences of the divine. But his examination of the textual evidence does not support this hypothesis conclusively. He finds evidence of historical stagnations and regressions in Persian, Indian and Buddhist religion, and the Evangelists' description of Christ's ascension. Furthermore, the lack of development in China is

such that he attempts to use China's "complete atheism" as a countermeasure against which developments in the West can be understood as progressions toward the more complete understanding of existential order gained by Christians. In conventional language, Schelling begins by presupposing that God shows no partiality, but his analysis of the historical records of experience leaves him to confront the problem that universal truths seem to emerge in particular people, times and places.

Voegelin attempts to solve this problem by facing it directly. He constructs a differentiated historiography predicated on the claim that historical consciousness is a Western discovery, arising during the Ecumenic Age and having universal bearing on how the nature of human consciousness is best understood. However, aside from granting that universal truths emerge in particular circumstances, Voegelin's developmental account of history's order retains many of the points that are distinctive to Schelling's work.

In a private correspondence, Voegelin tells Schütz that he understands the historical progression of mythology in terms of Schelling's "theogony." That is to say, his account of "compact" or "cosmological" myth is equivalent to Schelling's account of "mythological religion." His account of "anthropological" and "soteriological" types of truth is equivalent to Schelling's account of "revealed religion," and his appeal to the "eschatological structure" of history—leading toward "universal humanity"—is equivalent to Schelling's account of "philosophical religion" as an eschatological index. Voegelin retains the notion of "leaps in being" as an equivalent for Schelling's account of epoch-making "spiritual crises." And he finds the most "differentiated" level of experience and symbolization in an esoteric reading of Christian saints, notably Paul and Augustine. None of these points is dropped in Voegelin's account of the change in his latest historiography. In fact, no substantial change is evident between the periods he describes. His latest work recasts the historical progression of spiritual truth as the development from "noetic" to "pneumatic" types of

revelation. But since Schelling also granted a certain type of revelation to select members of pre-Christian societies, this change in Voegelin's terminology constitutes no break with Schelling. His latest historical thought continues to be oriented by the Schellingian principles he acknowledged in a private letter to Robert Heilman in 1956. Guided by Schelling's mystical variety of Christian historicism, Voegelin identifies history and being in a "self-interpretive" process-theology of history, leading from "compact" experiences and symbolizations of cosmological order to the "differentiated" claim that reality itself has an eschatological structure—from which salvation lies only through "grace in death."

Voegelin's claim that the historical process of differentiating consciousness appears to be leading toward the unity of universal humanity has caused his historical thought to be confused with Hegel's. But I have argued, to the contrary, that the pre-reflective understanding of such unity in Schelling's identity-philosophy best explains how Voegelin can construct an historical philosophy of reflective differentiations without falling prey to the gnosticism of Hegel's historicism. To wit, Voegelin's understanding of the process of historical differentiations unites for reflective consciousness only what has always already been united in the divine substance of the universe. Voegelin does not attempt to produce or construct the identity of humanity and divinity at the end of a reflective system, but to remember the forgotten identity that has always been substantially real—that "[t]hings do not happen in the astrophysical universe; the universe, together with all things founded in it, happens in God" (*OHIV*: 334).

Voegelin does not frequently call attention to the Schellingian orientation in his thought. Instead, he appeals to others for insights that are more distinctively Schellingian. For example, he replaces Schelling's claim that the substance of the All is known through intellectual intuition—pre-reflective experiences of contemplative reason—with praiseworthy allusions to William James'

concept of "immediate experience."¹ He replaces Schelling's concept of absolute identity with the concept of "consubstantiality," a term Voegelin takes from the Oriental Institute at the University of Chicago.² He refers to Karl Löwith for the dictum that there is no meaning *of* history, only meaning *in* history, but he does not reveal that he once found the same point in Schelling's *Ages of the World*.³ Finally, instead of appealing to Schelling's open soul as a principle guide through the spiritual crises of modernity, Voegelin refers to Henri Bergson's "*l'âme ouverte*" as the primary symbol for a spiritual realist's openness toward reality.⁴ For reasons that shall remain unknown, due to the lack of textual evidence, Voegelin restricts his own participation in the "Schelling-Renaissance" to the "undercurrent" level. My work has indicated that Voegelin's appeals to Schelling's "gnosticism" are insufficient to explain why he was reticent to acknowledge being guided by Schelling during the greatest part of his publishing career. Quite simply, with the help of Voegelin's reading from his "Last Orientation," I have found that Schelling was no more of a gnostic than Voegelin. Both thinkers were critical realists who occasionally set aside their concrete insights from the philosophy of consciousness in order to speculate on an abstract order of history.

¹ E.g., "EESH," 131.

² Cf., *Conversations*, 46-7.

³ Cf., "LO," 212. Regrettably, it will be difficult for most readers to corroborate this point, due to a typographical error in the recently published version of "Last Orientation." In the Hoover Institution manuscript of this text, Voegelin writes that in Schelling "the source of 'meaning' is *now* clearly circumscribed as the anamnestic dialogue that is going on in the soul" (Hoover Institution, Eric Voegelin Archives, Box 59, folder 7, 184; emphasis added). But in the published text it says: "the source of 'meaning' is *not* clearly circumscribed as the anamnestic dialogue. . ." ("LO," 212; emphasis added). The point that Voegelin takes from Schelling is the open-ended character of the future. Schelling's "anamnesis is neither completed nor will it be completed soon, and we do not know, therefore, the meaning of history as a whole" (*Ibid.*).

⁴ Bergson is one of several thinkers whom Voegelin mentions as a participant in the "undercurrent influence" of the "Schelling-Renaissance." Cf., *supra*, 10, 50; "LO," 241; and *FER*, 117.

APPENDIX

TRANSLATION OF SCHELLING'S OUTLINE FOR THE PHILOSOPHY OF MYTHOLOGY IN HIS *PHILOSOPHY OF REVELATION* (LECTURES XVIII & XXI)

I. PRIMORDIAL CONSCIOUSNESS (*Urbewußtseyn*)

Primordial humanity, enclosed within the three potencies, to which it is equal.

II. TRANSITION TO PROCESS [=Fall]

Man turns himself exclusively towards one principle (B), and falls under its control.

III. PROCESS

A: *First Epoch*. Exclusive reign of the *real* principle (=B) in consciousness. Complete being-out-of-self (*Völliges Außersichseyn*). Transition to following moment: astral religion—*Uranus*—Zabism, religion of absolutely prehistorical humanity. [Relative Monotheism]

[EMERGENCE OF FIRST SPIRITUAL CRISIS]

B: *Second Epoch*. The *real* principle=B renders itself accessible, surmountable by the superior [principle], becomes the matter (mother) of the latter— : Moment of *Urania* and of the first appearance of the superior potency, of *Dionysus: Persian, Babylonian, Arabian*. [Simultaneous Polytheism]

C: *Third Epoch*. Effective combat, which itself passes through several moments.

AA: *First Moment*. The *real* principle still restrains the superior in complete subordination, allowing it no part in being—form of servant (*Knechtsgestalt*), in which the superior potency appears—the *Phoenician Herakles* (Melkart). The opposing god—*Cronos* the Father.

[EMERGENCE OF SECOND SPIRITUAL CRISIS]

BB: *Second Moment*. Repeated softening [of first principle]—becoming—wife of *Cronos*—*Cybele* (mother of the gods [=Rhea])—*Phrygian* race.

CC: *Third Moment*. Effective surmounting [of first principle]. Progressive rise to superiority of third potency (to the extent that the first is surmounted).

Complete mythologies, yielding another three-fold distinction. [Successive Polytheism]

[Egypt] 1) The *real* principle (Typhon) still continues to fight for its existence: *Egyptian* mythology. The *three* potencies, *Typhon, Osiris, Horus* (Horus as infant—Isis).

[India] 2) The *real* principle is completely out of the battle (subjugated); but without this the unity would again be reformed; this is posed only in an ideal manner; the potencies, in effect, are in a state of complete separation from themselves [*Außereinanderseyn*]: *Indian* mythology—*Brahma*=B, *Shiva*=second, *Vishnu*=third potency.

[Greece] 3) Re-establishment of unity: the *real* principle returns to its latency and is conserved as the *ground* of religious consciousness; the second principle becomes effective in the surmounting of the first; the two together posit the third as the end of the entire process: *Greek* mythology.

a) *Exoteric* aspect: the material gods (causes, merely epiphenomenal), origin of the disintegration (*Zergehen*) of the *real* principle: the *world of the gods* in common consciousness.

b) *Esoteric aspect*: The potencies as *primordial causes* [*verursachenden*] in the proper sense of the term; the secret of all the process: *doctrines of the Mysteries*, where the content is the *One God*, not as abstract but passing through the three potencies, and which

aa) as *real*, but subjugated by the second potency (Dionysus) becomes itself =Dionysus— *Dionysus of the first potency* (the oldest), Zagreus=Dionysus of the past—*from* which—,

bb) in his achieved effectivity, as dominator [*Ueberwinder*] of the first potency, he is *Dionysus of the second potency*, Bacchus=Dionysus of the present—*through* which—,

cc) as posited through the two others (he who properly should be), [he is] *Dionysus of the third potency*, Iakchos= Dionysus of the future—*in* which are all the gods.

Corresponding to these three divinities, as their common consciousness—Demeter.¹

¹ Schelling, *Philosophie der Offenbarung, Werke*, II,3: xvii-xviii, xix-xx. This is how Schelling presents the *Philosophy of Mythology* in the context of his *Philosophy of Revelation*. The shorter account of mythological religion in the latter text could not be followed exclusively in my own sketch of these "philosophies," because Schelling cleans up the history in the latter text by completely ignoring the problems of historical "stagnation" in China and Persia.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Works by Eric Voegelin

Anamnesis. Gerhart Niemeyer, trans. & ed., Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1990.

Anamnesis: Zur Theorie der Geschichte und Politik. Munich: R. Piper & Co. Verlag, 1966.

Autobiographical Reflections. Ellis Sandoz, ed., Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1989.

"Consciousness and Order: Foreword to 'Anamnesis' (1966)," "The Meditative Origin of the Philosophical Knowledge of Order (1981)," "Responses at the Panel Discussion of 'The Beginning of the Beginning'" and "Autobiographical Statement At Age Eighty-Two," in *The Beginning and the Beyond: Papers from the Gadamer and Voegelin Conferences*, Supplementary Issue of *Loneragan Workshop*, Vol. 4, Fred Lawrence, ed., Boston: Boston College, 1984.

Conversations with Eric Voegelin. E. O'Connor, ed., Montréal: Thomas More Institute, 1980.

Faith and Political Philosophy: The Correspondence Between Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin, 1934-1964. Peter Emberley and Barry Cooper, trans. & eds., University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993.

From Enlightenment to Revolution. J.H. Hallowell, ed. Durham: Duke University Press, 1975.

History of Political Ideas.

Vol. I. *Hellenism, Rome, and Early Christianity*. Athanasios Moulakis, ed., *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, Vol. 19. Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1997.

Vol. VII, *The New Order and Last Orientation*. Jürgen Gebhardt & Thomas A. Hollweck, eds., *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, Vol. 25. Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1999.

"Industrial Society in Search of Reason," in *World Technology and Human Destiny*. R. Aron, ed. Michigan: University of Michigan Press (1963): 31-46.

"Liberalism and its History," *Review of Politics*. XXXVI, 4 (1974): 504-20. Originally Published as "Der Liberalismus und seine Geschichte," in Karl Forster, ed., *Christentum und Liberalismus: Studien und Bericht der Katholischen Akademie in Bayern*. Munich: Zink (1960): 13-42.

The New Science of Politics: An Introduction. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1987.

On the Form of the American Mind, in *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, Vol. 1, Ruth Hein, trans., Jürgen Gebhardt and Barry Cooper, eds., Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1995.

"On Readiness to Rational Discussion," in *Freedom and Serfdom*. Albert Hunold, ed., Dordrecht, Holland: D. Reidel Publishing Company, 1961. Originally published as "Diskussionsbereitschaft," in Albert Hunold, ed., *Erziehung zur Freiheit*. Erlenbach-Zurich and Stuttgart: Rentsch (1959): 355-72.

Order and History. Available Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1999.

Vol. I. *Israel and Revelation*. 1956.

Vol. II. *The World of the Polis*. 1957.

Vol. III. *Plato and Aristotle*. 1957.

Vol. IV. *The Ecumenic Age*. 1974.

Vol. V. *In Search of Order*. 1987.

"Plato's Egyptian Myth," *The Journal of Politics* 9/3 (August, 1947): 307-24.

Political Religions. T. J. DiNapoli & E. S. Easterly III, trans., Lewiston, N.Y.: The Edwin Mellen Press, 1986.

Published Essays: 1966-1985, in *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, Vol. 12. Ellis Sandoz, ed., Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990.

Science, Politics and Gnosticism. William J. Fitzpatrick, trans., Washington, D.C.: Regnery Gateway, 1990.

"Structures in Consciousness," public talk from 1977, Zdravko Planinc, transcribed & ed., *Voegelin Research News* 2/3 (1996).

"Symposium Contributions," in *The Question as Commitment: A Symposium*. Elaine Cahn & Cathleen Going, eds., Thomas More Institute Papers, vol. 77. Montréal: Associates of the Thomas More Institute, 1979.

"*What is History? and Other Late Unpublished Writings*," in *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, Vol. 28. Thomas A. Hollweck & Paul Caringella, eds., Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1990.

Wissenschaft, Politik und Gnosis. München: Kösel-Verlag, 1959.

Selected Works by F. W. J. Schelling

The Ages of the World. Frederick de Wolfe Bolman, Jr., trans. and ed., New York: Columbia University Press, 1942.

Idealism and the Endgame of Theory: Three Essays by F. W. J. Schelling. Thomas Pfau, trans., intro. & ed., New York: State University of New York Press, 1994.

Ideas for a Philosophy of Nature. E. Harris & P. Heath, trans. & ed., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988.

Of Human Freedom. J. Gutman, trans., Chicago: Open Court Press, 1936.

Philosophie de la mythologie. Alain Pernet, trans., J. Millon: Krisis, 1994.

Philosophie de la révélation. Jean-François Courtine, trans., Epiméthée: Presses Universitaires de France, 1994.

Sämtliche Werke. Karl Friedrich Anton Schelling, ed., 14 Vols. Stuttgart / Augsburg: J.G. Cotta'scher Verlag, 1856-61.

"Schelling's Aphorisms of 1805," in *Idealistic Studies* 14 (1984):237-58.

Stuttgarter Privatvorlesungen. Miklos Vetö, ed., Turin: Bottega d'Erasmus, 1976. Translated into English by Thomas Pfau in *Idealism and the Endgame of Theory*.

System of Transcendental Idealism. Peter Heath, trans., Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 1978.

Additional Sources

Abrams, M. H. *Natural Supernaturalism.* New York, 1971.

Anastoplo, George. "On how Eric Voegelin has read Plato and Aristotle," in *Independent Journal of Philosophy* 5/6 (1988): 85-91.

Aristotle. *Metaphysics.* I-IX: H. Tredennick, trans.; X-XIV: H. Tredennick & G. Cyril Armstrong, trans., Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1933 & 1935.

_____. *Nicomachean Ethics.* H. Rackham, trans., Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1934.

_____. *The Politics.* Carnes Lord, trans., Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985.

Augustine. *City of God.* G.G. Walsh, D.B. Zema, G. Monahan, and D.J. Honan, trans., New York: Image Books, Doubleday, 1958.

_____. *Confessions.* Henry Chadwick, trans., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.

Beach, Edward Allen. *The Potencies of God(s): Schelling's Philosophy of Mythology.* New York: State University of New York Press, 1994.

Bowie, A. "Translator's Introduction," *On the History of Modern Philosophy.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994.

_____. *Schelling and Modern European Philosophy.* London: Routledge, 1993.

- Caringella, Paul. "Voegelin: Philosopher of Divine Presence," in *Eric Voegelin's Significance for the Modern Mind*. Ellis Sandoz, ed., Baton Rouge, La.: Louisiana State University Press (1991): 174-206.
- _____. "Eric Voegelin's View of History as a Drama of Transfiguration," in *International Philosophical Quarterly* 33 (1990): 7-22.
- Cooper, Barry. *Eric Voegelin and the Foundations of Modern Political Science*. Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1999.
- _____. & Peter Emberley, trans. & eds., *Faith and Political Philosophy: The Correspondence Between Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin, 1934-1964*. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993.
- _____. *Action into Nature: An Essay on the Meaning of Technology*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1991.
- _____. "Introduction," in *Political Religions*, by Erich Voegelin. Lewiston, N.Y.: Edwin Mellen Press (1986): v-xxvi.
- Danz, Christian. *Die philosophische Christologie F.W.J. Schellings*. Vol. IX, *Schellingiana*, Stuttgart-Bad Cannstatt: frommann-holzboog, 1996.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Margins of Philosophy*. Alan Bass, trans., Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1986.
- Dussort, Henri. *L'École de Marbourg*. Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1963.
- Fackenheim, Emil L. *The God Within: Kant, Schelling, and Historicity*. John Burbidge, ed., Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996.
- Federici, Michael, P. "Voegelin's Christian Critics," in *Modern Age*, 36 (1994): 331-40.
- Frank, Manfred. *Eine Einführung in Schellings Philosophie*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp, 1985.
- Franz, Michael G. *Eric Voegelin and the Politics of Spiritual Revolt*. Baton Rouge, Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 1993.
- Froman, Wayne J. "Schelling's *Treatise on the Essence of Human Freedom* and Heidegger's Thought," in *International Philosophical Quarterly* 30/4 (December, 1990): 465-80.
- Gadamer, Hans-Georg. *Truth and Method*. Second Revised Edition, Joel Weinsheimer & Donald G. Marshall, trans., New York: Crossroad, 1992.
- Gebhardt, Jürgen. "The Vocation of the Scholar," in *International and Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Eric Voegelin*. Stephen A. McKnight & Geoffrey L. Price, eds., Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press (1997): 10-34.

- _____. "Die Suche nach dem Grund—Eine zivilisationsgeschichtliche Konstante?" in *Symbol und Ordnungsformen im Zivilisationsvergleich*. Akademie für Politische Bildung, eds., Tutzing: Akademie für Politische Bildung, 1990.
- _____. "Towards the Process of Universal Mankind: The Formation of Voegelin's Philosophy of History," in *Eric Voegelin's Thought: A Critical Appraisal*. Ellis Sandoz, ed., Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press (1982): 67-86.
- _____. "Erfahrung und Wirklichkeit—Anmerkungen zur Politischen Wissenschaft des spirituellen Realismus," in *The Philosophy of Order*, Peter Opitz, ed., (1981): 332-44.
- Gottfried, Paul Edward. *The Search for Historical Meaning: Hegel and the Postwar American Right*. Dekalb: Northern Illinois University Press, 1986.
- Hayes, Victor C. "Schelling: Persistent Legends, Improving Image," in *The Southwestern Journal of Philosophy* 3 (1972): 63-73.
- Hegel, G. W. F. *The Phenomenology of Mind*. J. B. Baillie, trans., New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1967.
- Heidegger, Martin. *On Time and Being*. Joan Stambaugh, trans., New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1972.
- Hughes, Glenn, ed. *The Politics of the Soul: Eric Voegelin on religious experience*. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999.
- _____. *Mystery and Myth in the Philosophy of Eric Voegelin*. Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1993.
- _____. "Eric Voegelin's View of History as a Drama of Transfiguration," in *International Philosophical Quarterly* 30 (1990): 449-464.
- Husserl, Edmund. *Cartesian Meditations*. Dorion Cairns, trans., Dordrecht: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1993.
- Kant, Immanuel. *Critique of Pure Reason*. Norman Kemp Smith, trans., New York: St. Martin's Press, Macmillan & Co., Ltd., 1965.
- Keulman, Kenneth. *The Balance of Consciousness: Eric Voegelin's Political Theory*. University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1990.
- Kuhn, Helmut. "Das Problem einer philosophischen Historiographie: Zum Werke von Eric Voegelin," in *Zeitschrift für Politik* 28 (1981): 116-29.
- Lawrence, Frederick. "The Problem of Eric Voegelin, Mystic Philosopher and Scientist," in *International and Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Eric Voegelin*. McKnight & Price, eds., (1997): 35-58.

- _____. ed. *The Beginning and the Beyond: Papers from the Gadamer and Lonergan Conferences*. Lonergan Workshop, Vol. 4, Supplementary Volume. Chico, Ca.: Scholars Press, 1984.
- McKnight, Stephen. "The Evolution of Voegelin's Theory of Politics and History, 1944-1975," in *Eric Voegelin's Search for Order in History*. Stephen A. McKnight, ed., Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press (1978): 26-45; expanded edition, New York: University Press of America, 1987.
- _____. & Geoffrey L. Price, eds. *International and Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Eric Voegelin*. Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1997.
- Morrissey, Michael P. "Voegelin, Religious Experience, and Immortality," in *The Politics of the Soul*. Glenn Hughes, ed., (1999): 11-31.
- _____. *Consciousness and Transcendence: The Theology of Eric Voegelin*. Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1994.
- Moulakis, Athanasios. "Political Reality and History in the Work of Eric Voegelin," in *The Promise of History: Essays in Political Philosophy*. Athanasios Moulakis, ed., London & New York: Walter de Gruyter (1985): 120-34.
- Nash, George. *The Conservative Intellectual Movement in America Since 1945*. New York: Basic Books, 1976.
- Nieli, Russell. "Eric Voegelin: An Eschatological Direction to History?" in *Fides et Historia* 22 (1990): 3-15.
- Niemeyer, Gerhart. "Christian Faith and Religion in Eric Voegelin's Work," in *Review of Politics* 57/1 (1995): 91-104.
- _____. "Are There Intelligible Parts of History?" in *The Philosophy of Order: Essays on History, Consciousness and Politics*. Peter J. Opitz & Gregor Sebba, eds., Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta (1981): 302-15.
- _____. "Conservatism and the New Political Theory," in *Modern Age* 23 (1979): 115-22.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich. "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life," in *Untimely Meditations*, Daniel Breazeale, ed., R.J. Hollingdale, trans., Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1997): 57-123.
- Opitz, Peter J., and Sebba, Gregor, eds., *The Philosophy of Order*. Stuttgart: Ernst Klett, 1981.

- Petropulos, William. "Social Science and Salvation: Notes on one branch of German Sociology." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting, American Political Science Association, Washington, D.C., September 1, 2000.
- _____. "Eric Voegelin and German Sociology," in *Manchester Sociology Occasional Papers*, Peter Halfpenny, ed., 50 (February, 1998): 1-21.
- Plato. *Gorgias*. W. C. Helmbold, trans., New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1952.
- _____. *Laws*. Thomas L. Pangle, trans., Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1988.
- _____. *Phaedo*. Harold North Fowler, trans., Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1990.
- _____. *Republic*. I & II. Paul Shorey, trans., Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1937 & 1935.
- _____. *Theaetetus*. H. N. Fowler, trans., Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987.
- _____. *Timaeus*. R. G. Bury, trans., Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1961.
- Price, Geoffrey L. "The Epiphany of Universal Humanity," in *The Politics of the Soul*. Glenn Hughes, ed., (1999): 65-83.
- _____. "Critical History after Augustine and Orosius: Voegelin's Return to Plato," in *International and Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Eric Voegelin*. McKnight and Price, eds., (1997): 84-116.
- _____. "Augustine and Vico in Voegelin's Philosophy of History." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting, American Political Science Association, San Francisco, August 1996.
- _____. *Eric Voegelin: A Classified Bibliography*, in the *Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester*. 76/2 (Summer, 1994), and subsequent updates from *Voegelin--Research News*, Internet service.
- Ranieri, John. *Eric Voegelin and the Good Society*. Columbia, Mo.: University of Missouri Press, 1995.
- Reardon, Bernard, M. G. "Schelling's Critique of Hegel," in *Religious Studies* 20(1984): 543-57.
- Rhodes, James M. "On Voegelin: His Collected Works and His Significance," in *Review of Politics* 54 (1992): 621-47.
- _____. "Philosophy, Revelation, and Political Theory: Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin." *Journal of Politics*. 49/4 (1987): 1036-1060.
- _____. "Voegelin and Christian Faith," *Center Journal*, Vol. 2 (Summer, 1983): 55-105.

- Saltzman, Judy Deane. *Paul Natorp's Philosophy of Religion Within the Marburg Neo-Kantian Tradition*. New York: Georg Olms Verlag Hildesheim, 1981.
- Sandoz, Ellis. "Voegelin's Philosophy of History and Human Affairs." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting, American Political Science Association, San Francisco, Ca., August 31, 1996.
- _____. "Truth and the Experience of Epoch in History: A Voegelinian Perspective," in *Modern Age* 38 (1995): 7-21.
- _____. "Medieval Rationalism or Mystic Philosophy? Reflections on the Strauss-Voegelin Correspondence," in *Faith and Political Philosophy*, 297-319.
- _____. ed. *Eric Voegelin's Significance for the Modern Mind*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991.
- _____. ed. *Eric Voegelin's Thought: A Critical Appraisal*. Durham: Duke University Press, 1982.
- _____. *The Voegelinian Revolution*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981.
- Schulz, Walter. *Die Vollendung des deutschen Idealismus in der Spätphilosophie Schellings*. 2nd Ed. Pfullingen: Neske, 1975 [c. 1955].
- Sedlar, Jean W. *India in the Mind of Germany: Schelling, Schopenhauer and Their Times*. Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1982.
- Simmons, William P. "The Platonic Μεταξύ in the Writings of Eric Voegelin." Paper presented at the Annual Meeting, American Political Science Association, Chicago, September 2, 1995.
- Snow, Dale E. *Schelling and the End of Idealism*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 1996.
- Spann, Othmar. *Religionsphilosophie: auf Geschichtlicher Grundlage*. Wien: Gallus-Verlag, 1947.
- Tillich, Paul. *Mystik und Schuldbewusstsein in Schelling's philosophischer Entwicklung*. Gütersloh, 1912.
- _____. *The Construction of the History of Religion in Schelling's Positive Philosophy*. Victor Nuovo, trans., Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1974.
- _____. *Mysticism and Guilt-Consciousness in Schelling's Philosophical Development*. Victor Nuovo, trans., Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1974.
- Tilliette, X. *Schelling. Une philosophie en devenir*. Paris: Vrin, 1970.

Urs von Balthasar, Hans. *Apokalypse der deutschen Seele*, Vol. I. Salzburg-Leipzig, 1937.

Wagner, Helmut R. *Alfred Schütz: An Intellectual Biography*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1983.

Webb, Eugene. *Philosophers of Consciousness: Polanyi, Lonergan, Voegelin, Ricoeur, Girard, Kierkegaard*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1988.

_____. *Eric Voegelin: Philosopher of History*. Seattle, Washington and London: University of Washington Press, 1981.

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

Žižek, Slavoj. *The Abyss of Freedom*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997.

_____. *The Indivisible Remainder: An Essay on Schelling and Related Matters*. New York: Verso, 1996.