VOEGELINIANA

OCCASIONAL PAPERS

— NO. 83 —

Thomas A. Hollweck

Truth and Relativity
and
Other Writings

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VOEGELINIANA – OCCASIONAL PAPERS

Hrsg. von Peter J. Opitz
in Verbindung mit dem Voegelin-Zentrum für Politik, Kultur und Religion am Geschwister-Scholl-Institut für Politikwissenschaft der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München; gefördert durch den Eric-Voegelin-Archiv e.V. und den Luise Betty Voegelin Trust

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Hrsg. von Peter J. Opitz

THOMAS HOLLWECK war bis März 2011 Associate Professor für Deutsche Literatur und Geistesgeschichte am Department of Germanic and Slavic Languages and Literatures der University of Colorado in Boulder, Colorado, USA. Hollweck starb am 7. März 2011.
Zu seinen Veröffentlichungen zählen vor allem Arbeiten über Thomas Mann und Eric Voegelin. Thomas Hollweck gehörte dem Editorial Board der *Collected Works of Eric Voegelin* an und war Herausgeber und Mitherausgeber mehrerer Bände der *Collected Works*; zuletzt der *Selected Correspondence of Eric Voegelin. 1950-1984* (2007).

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INHALTSVERZEICHNIS

IN MEMORIAM THOMAS HOLLWECK

Der Kreis derer, die sich ernsthaft mit dem Werk Eric Voegelins auseinandersetzen, ist noch immer klein – in Deutschland ebenso wie in den USA. Thomas Hollweck gehörte zu diesem Kreis, und weil er sowohl in den USA wie in Deutschland in den Diskussionen präsent war, war er in ihm auch einer der Wichtigsten. Sein Tod hat eine schmerzliche Lücke gerissen, nicht nur in den USA und in Europa, sondern auch als wohl wichtigstes Verbindungsglied zwischen den beiden Regionen.

Ich erinnere mich nicht mehr genau, wann wir einander begegneten. Es muss um die Mitte der 60er Jahre gewesen sein, denn zu jener Zeit war Voegelin noch in München, und das Institut für Politische Wissenschaft war noch immer in der Konradstraße 6 angesiedelt. Ich wohnte damals in der Schleißheimerstraße, und da der Weg von dort zum Institut relativ kurz war, pflegte ich zumeist zu Fuß zu gehen. Und dabei stieß ich zum ersten Mal – bald aber regelmäßig – auf Thomas Hollweck. Wie ich später erfuhr, wohnte er bei seiner Mutter in der Elisabethstraße 49. Offenbar brach er jeweils kurz vor mir von zu Hause auf, denn zumeist sah ich ihn nur hundert Meter vor mir. Das Kuriose aber war, dass wir an manchen Tagen auf Voegelin stießen – er wohnte damals am Josephsplatz –, der sich ebenfalls auf dem Weg zum Institut befand. Die Reihenfolge, zu der es dabei häufig kam, war dann die folgende: Ganz am Anfang spazierte Voegelin, zumeist recht gemächlich, in respektvollem Abstand folgte Thomas Hollweck, offenbar bestrebt, ihn nicht einzuholen, und den Schluss bildete ich. Erst wenn Voegelin das Institut erreichte, hatten sich die Abstände soweit verkürzt, dass wir das Haus fast gemeinsam betraten und dann dicht nacheinander – aber noch immer in der alten Reihenfolge – die Treppe in den zweiten Stock hinaufstiegen.

Ich erinnere mich nicht mehr, wann und wo wir das erste Mal miteinander ins Gespräch kamen – vermutlich geschah dies in der Bibliothek oder während eines Seminars. Zu jener Zeit entwickelte sich jedoch noch keine nähere Beziehung. Die Begegnungen blieben flüchtig, und bald verloren wir uns wieder aus den Augen. Das hatte wohl auch damit zu tun, dass ich im Herbst 1966 für ein Jahr nach Berkeley ging, an die University of California, und sich die Münch-

ner Zeit Voegelins bald nach meiner Rückkehr ihrem Ende näherte. Er hatte sich entschlossen, nach seiner Emeritierung wieder in die USA zurückzukehren. Thomas Hollweck bemerkte später dazu, dass für Voegelin „die Münchner Jahre mit ihren regelmäßigen Unterbrechungen durch Gastvorlesungen in den USA in mancher Hinsicht die produktivsten und – mit Abschlägen – wohl auch die glücklichsten seiner Laufbahn waren." Über diese Einschätzung kann man streiten. Ich hatte eher den Eindruck, als habe Voegelin aus Verbitterung über die Entwicklung, die das Institut in jenen Jahren genommen hatte, München den Rücken gekehrt. Glücklich habe ich ihn in jener Zeit jedenfalls nur selten erlebt. Und auch mit der Produktivität der Münchner Jahre hat es eine eigene Bewandtnis. Gewiss, Voegelin veröffentlichte in diesen Jahren eine Reihe wichtiger Aufsätze, aber mit dem Hauptprojekt, auf dessen Abschluss er schon bald nach seiner Ankunft in Deutschland gehofft hatte – seine sechsbändige *Order and History*, – war er kaum weiter gekommen. Der vierte Band *The Ecumenic Age* erschien erst einige Jahre nach seiner Rückkehr in die USA, obwohl, wie er 1959 seinem Verleger anvertraut hatte, die Annahme des Rufes nach München auch mit den viel besseren Arbeitsbedingungen dort zu tun gehabt hatte. Doch wie dem auch sei, Thomas, der inzwischen ebenfalls in die USA gegangen war, mochte in den zahlreichen Gesprächen, die er seitdem mit Voegelin führte, einen anderen Eindruck gewonnen haben. Denn nach der Übersiedlung Voegelins nach Palo Alto hatten sich seine Beziehungen zu ihm deutlich intensiviert. Er wurde in dieser Zeit zu einem der bevorzugten Gesprächspartner Voegelins und blieb es bis zu dessen Tod.

Anfang der 80er Jahre kreuzten sich unsere Wege zum zweiten Male, und nun begann sich unsere Beziehung zu intensivieren und schließlich in eine Freundschaft zu verwandeln. Anlass war die Festschrift, die Gregor Sebba und ich zum 80. Geburtstag Voegelins vorbereiteten. Es war Gregor Sebba, seinerzeit Direktor des Graduate Institute of Liberal Arts an der Emory University in Atlanta (Georgia) und einer der ältesten Freunde Voegelins und intimsten Kenner seines Werkes, der anregte, Thomas in das Unternehmen einzubeziehen. Er hatte in Emory die Dissertation von Thomas betreut und hielt große Stücke auf ihn. Der Essay, den dieser schließlich ablieferte – er trug den Titel „Truth and Relativity: On the

Historical Emergence of Truth“ – bestätigte unsere hohen Erwartungen, und es war besonders dieser Beitrag, über den sich Voegelin positiv äußerte. Insofern war es auch keine Überraschung, dass Thomas nach dessen Tod Mitglied des Editorial Board der *Collected Works of Eric Voegelin* wurde. Die Einleitungen, die er den von ihm selbst herausgegebenen Bänden beisteuerte, gehören zu den besten und lesenswertesten der gesamten Edition.

Getragen vom gemeinsamen Interesse am Werk Voegelins und der Sorge um dessen Zukunft begannen sich unsere Beziehungen nun schnell zu vertiefen. Insofern lag es nahe, Thomas von Beginn an in die Aktivitäten des Anfang der 90er Jahre von mir am Geschwister-Scholl-Institut gegründeten Eric-Voegelin-Archivs einzubinden, wozu er – anders als andere – sofort bereit war. Auch er sah in der Gründung des Archivs eine Chance, der Auseinandersetzung mit dem Werk Voegelins in Deutschland neue Impulse zu geben. So wurde er nicht nur eines der frühesten Mitglieder des Wissenschaftlichen Beirats, sondern nahm auch von Beginn an regelmäßig an den jährlich veranstalteten internationalen Symposien teil. Seine Vorträge gehörten zu deren Glanzlichtern, ebenso seine anregenden Diskussionsbeiträge. Seiner relativ häufigen Anwesenheit am Archiv kam zweifellos die Tatsache zugute, dass seine Mutter noch immer in München wohnte und er jede Möglichkeit nutzte, sie zu besuchen. Doch auch nach ihrem Tod kam er immer wieder nach München, und wir verbrachten viele Stunden im Gespräch über Philosophie, Literatur und die demnächst anstehenden Aktivitäten des Archivs und die Möglichkeiten seiner Mitwirkung.

Schon bald nach Gründung des Archivs war dessen Editions- und Publikationsprogramm angelaufen. Es begann mit der *Periagogé*-Reihe, also mit Übersetzungen und Neuauflagen von Werken Voegelins. Mitte der 90er Jahre folgte die *Occasional Paper*-Reihe, mit kleineren Arbeiten von und über Voegelin. Es lag in der Natur der Sache, sich gerade bei diesen Projekten der Mitarbeit von Thomas zu vergewissern. Denn nicht nur gehörte er zu den intimsten Kennern des Voegelinschen Werkes und dessen Nachlasses, aus dem er viele bis dahin unbekannte Stücke zutage förderte. Er war auch ein begnadeter Stilist, der sich, ungeachtet seiner langen Abwesenheit aus Deutschland, in seiner Muttersprache noch immer ebenso klar

und elegant auszudrücken verstand wie auf Englisch. Er wurde über die Jahre zu einem der produktivsten und verlässlichsten Autoren. Der gleich zu Beginn von ihm edierte Wedekind-Essay Voegelins gehört zu den frühen Glanzstücken der Reihe ebenso wie die einige Jahre später von ihm edierte und kommentierte Korrespondenz zwischen Hermann Broch und Voegelin. Es waren jedoch nicht nur die literarischen Arbeiten Voegelins, die Thomas als Germanisten interessierten, seine Studien zur modernen Gnosis und sein Essay über „Kosmos und Geschichte“ bzw. über Voegelin und Blumenberg zeigten auch ein bemerkenswertes Gespür für die unterschiedlichsten Problemkomplexe einer zeitgemäßen Theorie der Politik.

Dank einer generösen Zuwendung von Lissy Voegelin waren Ende der 90er Jahre endlich die finanziellen Voraussetzungen für eine deutsche Übersetzung von *Order and History* gegeben. Diese Edition war das ambitionierteste Projekt des Archivs. Um es möglichst zügig durchzuführen, war geplant, die deutsche Fassung auf zehn Bände aufzuteilen und gleichzeitig mit der Arbeit an allen Bänden zu beginnen. Thomas war sogleich bereit, die Betreuung eines dieser Bände zu übernehmen. Er entschied sich für den ersten Teilband von *Ecumenic Age*. Wohl nicht zufällig, denn dessen langjährige Entstehung – Voegelin entwarf in 17 Jahren in immer neuen Anläufen immer wieder neue Gliederungen – hatte er in zahlreichen Gesprächen mit Voegelin in allen Einzelheiten verfolgt. Sein Nachwort „Geschichte als offener Horizont“ wurde zu einer ebenso sorgfältigen Rekonstruktion der komplizierten Genese dieses Bandes wie zu einer einfühlsamen Erhellung der in ihm behandelten theoretischen Probleme.

Ich wusste seit einiger Zeit, dass Thomas inzwischen an einer schweren Krankheit litt. Man sah es ihm an, und er hatte es bei einem seiner Besuche selbst angedeutet, ohne allerdings in Details zu gehen. Er gab auch zu verstehen, dass sie seine Reisetätigkeit einschränkte, auch seine Arbeitskraft, was ihn allerdings nicht daran hinderte, seine Studien zu Voegelin unvermindert fortzusetzen. Es mag vor einem Jahr gewesen sein – die *Collected Works*-Edition war inzwischen abgeschlossen und die von Thomas besorgte *Selected Correspondence 1950-1984* war einer der letzten großen Bände –, da erzählte er mir, dass er mit einem Buch über die Geschichtsphilosophie

Voegelins begonnen habe und hoffe, es „noch rechtzeitig fertig stellen zu können“. Ich wusste, was diese Formulierung bedeutete, vermied es aber, darauf einzugehen – zumal er zuversichtlich und entschlossen klang. Diese Zuversicht verschwand auch in den nächsten Monaten nicht, obwohl seine nun häufiger werdenden Berichte über den Krankheitsverlauf und die Ungewissheit über die Wirksamkeit der diversen Therapien unsere langen Telefonate zunehmend überschatteten. Als ich im Herbst letzten Jahres (2010) von einer Reise an die Ostsee und nach Rügen berichtete, schrieb er zurück „Ich würde auch gern einmal die Gegend besuchen, in der ich die ersten zweieinhalb Jahre meines Lebens verbracht habe.“

Er selbst, so erzählte er, sei im Sommer „mit Schreiben“ beschäftigt gewesen, unter anderem an einem Text mit dem Titel „Cosmos and ‚The Leap in Being’ in Voegelin’s Philosophy“, den er auf dem diesjährigen APSA-Treffen vorzutragen beabsichtigte; sollte er sich für eine Veröffentlichung eignen, würde er ihn noch einmal gründlich überarbeiten. Der Hinweis auf die Veröffentlichung bezog sich auf meine Anfrage nach einem geeigneten Manuskript für die *Voegeliniana*-Reihe. Natürlich war ich an dem Text, den er als Anlage geschickt hatte, mehr als interessiert, und schon kurze Zeit später traf eine überarbeitete Fassung ein – allerdings verbunden mit der Bitte, mit einer Veröffentlichung noch zu warten, da man angeregt habe, den Text auch in einer amerikanischen Fachzeitschrift zu veröffentlichen. Diese Aussicht gefiel ihm, wie er mir in einem langen Telefonat versicherte, in dem er gleichzeitig einen weiteren Text anbot – „A Disturbance in Being: The Idea of Revolution in History“. Ihn könne man, wie er vorschlug, vielleicht zusammen mit dem „Leap“-Text veröffentlichen. Doch einige Wochen später, es mag Ende Januar 2011 gewesen sein, hatte er die Hoffnung auf eine Veröffentlichung in den USA aufgegeben. Ein neues Medikament, auf das er große Hoffnungen gesetzt hatte, hatte sich inzwischen als unwirksam erwiesen. Die Perspektiven seiner Planungen hatten sich damit verändert – verkürzt. Er wusste nun, seine Zeit lief ab. Wie es aussehe, so bemerkte er, würde er wohl nicht einmal mehr den Abschluss der zeitaufwendigen peer-Reviews erleben. Aber er würde weiter an den Texten arbeiten, ebenso wie an dem geplanten Buch über die Geschichtsphilosophie Voegelins. Zwar gehe inzwischen

alles ein wenig langsamer, doch er sei schon ein ganzes Stück vorangekommen und trotz allem guten Mutes.

Am 9. März 2011 – es war ein Mittwoch – erhielt ich von Paul Caringella die Nachricht, Thomas sei am Montag am Nachmittag gestorben. Noch am Wochenende hatte ich mit Thomas telefoniert. Obwohl wir im Archiv mit dieser Nachricht gerechnet hatten, kam sie überraschend, denn trotz der sich verschlechternden gesundheitlichen Lage hatten seine Berichte weiterhin optimistisch geklungen. Thomas hatte sich mit seinem Schicksal abgefunden, aber er hatte sich nicht aufgegeben. Sein Lebensmut war ungebrochen. Und neben seiner Familie und seinem Lebenspartner, über die er inzwischen immer ausführlicher und immer häufiger sprach, war es nicht zuletzt die Arbeit an dem geplanten Buch, die ihm Halt und Hoffnung gab. Mit Thomas hat die Voegelin-Forschung einen ihrer kompetentesten Gelehrten verloren, das Münchner Voegelin-Archiv einen seiner engagiertesten Autoren, die Voegelin-Gesellschaft eines ihrer ältesten Mitglieder und ich einen meiner besten Freunde. Wir trauern um ihn – er fehlt uns.

Peter J. Opitz

Anna E. Frazier,
Eberhard von Lochner,
Guiliana Parotto
William Petropulos
Christian Schwaabe

IN MEMORIAM THOMAS HOLLWECK

The circle of those who have earnestly studied Eric Voegelin's work is still quite small, both in Germany and North America. Thomas Hollweck was a member of this small circle, and because he was at home in the discussion of Voegelin's works in both the United States and Germany, he was one of its most important members. His death is a painful loss, not just for the reception of Eric Voegelin's work in the United States and Europe, but also because he was among the small number of Voegelin scholars who are at home in the research going on in both continents.

I no longer recall our first meeting. It took place in the mid1960s, when Voegelin was still in Munich and the Political Science Institute was located in the Konradstrasse 6. I lived in the Schleißheimerstrasse at the time and since the way to the Institute was not long, I generally walked. One day on my way to the Institute I encountered Thomas Hollweck, and after that I saw him regularly. As I learned later, at the time he lived at home with his mother in the Elisabethstrasse 49. It appears that he left his apartment every morning just before I left mine, for I generally saw him only about a hundred meters in front of me. Interestingly enough, on some days we encountered Voegelin as well. He lived at Josephsplatz and his path to the Institute converged with ours. Usually the following order established itself: Voegelin at the head of the column, generally proceeding at a leisurely pace, Thomas Hollweck following at a respectful distance, and making an effort not to overtake him, and me at the end. Not until Voegelin reached the Institute had the distances between us so diminished that, although in the same order, we entered the building more or less together and, one after another, mounted the steps to the Institute.

I don't remember when Thomas Hollweck and I had our first conversation; presumably it took place in the Institute's library or following a seminar. But, however it took place, at the time we did not develop a closer relationship. Our encounters remained occasional and, in fact, we soon lost track of each other. This was partly due to my going to Berkeley for a year in the autumn of 1966, and by the time I returned, Voegelin's years in Munich were drawing to a close.

He had decided to return to the United States following his retirement. Thomas Hollweck later noted that for Voegelin „the years in Munich, with their regular breaks to undertake guest professorships in the United States, were in some ways the most productive, and with a few qualifications, the happiest of his career." One can argue with this assessment. My own impression was that Voegelin left Munich embittered over the changes that the Institute had been subjected to in its later years. And, for my part, I cannot say that I often found him happy during this time. Nor, in my view, is the issue of Voegelin's productivity during his Munich years so clear cut. Certainly he published a number of very important essays during this time. But, as far as his main project was concerned, which he had hoped to bring to a close within a short time after his arrival in Germany in 1958 — i.e., the remaining three volumes of his projected six volume *Order and History*— he made little progress. Indeed, the fourth volume, *The Ecumenic Age*, didn't appear until 1974, a number of years after he had returned to the United States; and this, although, in 1959, he told the book's publisher that he had accepted the call to the University of Munich because it would provide him with better working conditions for completing the volumes than he had at Louisiana. But, regardless of how one sees these issues, Thomas, who in the meantime had also gone to the United States, may have gotten a different impression from the many conversations he had with Voegelin; for, after Voegelin moved to Palo Alto, Thomas' relationship to him became much more intense. During this period he was one of Voegelin's preferred dialog partners, and remained so until Voegelin's death.

At the beginning of the 1980s our paths crossed again, and from that time on our relationship became closer, until, finally, it developed into a friendship. The occasion for our renewed contact was the *Festschrift* that Gregor Sebba and I prepared for Voegelin's 80th birthday. At the time Gregor Sebba was Director of the Graduate Institute of Liberal Arts at Emory University in Atlanta (Georgia). As one of Voegelin's oldest friends he was intimately acquainted with Voegelin's work and he suggested that we include Thomas Hollweck in our project. At Emory Sebba had been the dissertation advisor to Thomas and he thought very highly of him. The essay that Thomas contributed to the *Festschrift*– „Truth and Relativity: On the

Historical Emergence of Truth“ – fully confirmed our high expectations, and Voegelin himself later spoke of it very positively. Thus, it came as no surprise that following Voegelin’s death Thomas became one of the four members of the Editorial Board of the *Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*. And the Introductions he wrote for the volumes issued under his name are among the best in the edition.

Drawn together by our common interest in Voegelin’s work and the desire to insure its continued reception, our relationship rapidly began to deepen. It was therefore quite natural – and in contrast to some others – that Thomas eagerly joined in the work of the Eric Voegelin Archive that I founded in the 1990s at the Geschwister-Scholl-Institut. Thomas also viewed the founding of the archive as an opportunity to provide new impetus to the study of Voegelin's work in Germany. He became not just one of the first members of the scholarly advisory board, but also regularly took part in the Archive sponsored international symposia. His lectures are among the symposia’s highlights. Undoubtedly the Archive also benefited from the fact that his mother lived in Munich and Thomas’ frequent visits to her made it easier for him to take part in the Archive’s work. But also in later years, after his mother’s death, he continued to come to Munich frequently and we spent many enjoyable hours discussing philosophy and literature, as well making plans for the Archive’s activities and for his participation in them.

Shortly after the founding of the Archive several series of publications were initiated. It began with the *Periagogé* series which published German translations of Voegelin’s works and new editions of his early German works. In the mid-1990s the series of *Occasional Papers* (later named *Voegeliniana*) began to publish Voegelin’s shorter texts, as well as scholarly essays and smaller monographs devoted to his work. Especially with regard to these projects, it is fitting to recall Thomas’ contributions. For, not only was he among the few who were intimately acquainted with Voegelin’s work– including his unpublished manuscripts, in which, among other texts, he discovered the important handwritten Introduction to Voegelin‘s *History of Political Ideas*. But Thomas was also a gifted stylist who, despite his long absence from Germany, wrote as clearly

and elegantly in German as he did in English. In the ensuing years he became one of the Archive's most productive and consistent contributors. At the very beginning he edited Voegelin's essay on Frank Wedekind, one of the early highpoints in the *Occasional Papers* series; and the same may be said of his edition of the correspondence between Hermann Broch and Eric Voegelin which appeared a number of years later. But it was not merely Voegelin's literary works that interested him as a professor of German Studies; his work on Voegelin's Gnosis thesis and his essay on "Cosmos and History", resp. on Voegelin and Blumenberg, demonstrated Thomas' keen understanding of some of the most varied and important themes in contemporary political theory.

Thanks to a very generous bequest by Lissy Voegelin, by the end of the 1990s the funding for a German translation of *Order and History* had been secured. This was the Archive's most ambitious project. In order to carry it out in the shortest possible time, we decided on a ten volume edition, with work to start on all ten volumes at the same time. Thomas was immediately willing to take responsibility for one of the volumes. He selected part one of the *Ecumenic Age*, a work to be published in two volumes. It was a book on which Voegelin had worked for seventeen years, repeatedly changing its structure. It was no accident that Thomas chose to edit this volume. In numerous discussions with Voegelin, he had accompanied the long genesis of this volume, and his "Afterword" to the German translation „History as Open Horizon" is both a careful reconstruction of the complex history of the growth of the work, as well as a sympathetic analysis of the theoretical problems which had repeatedly delayed its publication.

I had known for a while that, in the meantime, Thomas was suffering from a serious illness. One could see it, and during one of his visits he had mentioned it briefly, without going into detail. He indicated that it limited his ability to travel and his capacity for work, but he continued his Voegelin studies with undiminished concentration. About a year ago – just after the completion of the American edition of the *Collected Works*, in which Thomas' edition of the *Selected Correspondence 1950-1984* was one of the last large volumes, and in which he had invested an incredible amount of work – he told me

that he had begun to work on a book about Voegelin's philosophy of history. And he added: I hope I will be able "finish it in time". I immediately realized what these words referred to, but I did not respond directly; mainly because he was not at all dismayed by the thought and seemed confident that he would complete it "in time". Nor did this confidence diminish in the next few months, although increasingly the course of his illness and the uncertainty concerning the efficacy of the various therapies he was undergoing, cast their shadow over our telephone conversations. When I wrote him last fall of a trip to the Baltic Sea and to Rügen, he wrote back: „I would also like to revisit the places where I spent the first two and half years of my life."

He also spoke of his own work. He told me that he was engaged „in writing", among other things, a paper with the title „Cosmos and 'The Leap in Being' in Voegelin's Philosophy", which he intended to present at the APSA meeting in September and which, in the event of the possibility of publication, he would expand and deepen. The reference to a possible publication took up a request I had made earlier for a manuscript from him for the *Voegeliniana* series. Of course I was very interested in the APSA text which he had sent as an attachment to his email, and a few weeks later I received a revised version. However he asked me to wait with the publication because it had been suggested that he also publish it in an American professional journal. He was pleased with this possibility, as he told me in a later telephone conversation. In the meantime he had also offered me a further text – „A Disturbance in Being: The Idea of Revolution in History" –, which, as he suggested, could perhaps be published in conjunction with „Cosmos and 'The Leap in Being'. But, sadly, a few weeks later, I think it was the end of January, he had given up on publishing it in the United States. For, in the meantime, a new medication, in which he had placed great hope, had proved ineffective and the perspectives of his planning had therefore been altered; he knew that the time he had left was limited. The way things looked, he said, he did not believe that he would live to see the still outstanding, and not soon to be expected, second peer review of his essay. He said that he would continue to work on his book on Voegelin's history of philosophy, which in the meantime progressed

more slowly, but he was optimistic for, despite everything, he had seen the text grow quite a bit.

On Wednesday, March 9, 2011, I received the news from Paul Caringella that Thomas had died the previous Monday. Just that weekend I had spoken with Thomas by phone. And, although at the Archive we had had to reckon with receiving such news, it still came as a shock. For despite the deteriorating state of his health, his reports had always been optimistic. He had accepted his fate but he had not surrendered to it, and his zest for life had remained unbroken. Next to his family and his partner, about whom he had spoken more and more, it was the work on his book that had given him strength and hope. With Thomas Hollweck Voegelin studies have lost one of their most competent scholars, the Voegelin Archive one of its most important contributors, the Voegelin-Society one of its long standing members, and I, one of my best friends. We mourn his passing and shall miss him very much.

Peter J. Opitz

Anna E. Frazier
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Guiliana Parotto,
William Petropulos,
Christian Schwaabe

VORWORT DES HERAUSGEBERS

Wie von Thomas Hollweck gewünscht und in den letzten Monaten gemeinsam geplant, veröffentlichen wir in diesem Paper – es ist das erste, das nach seinem Tode erscheint – die letzten beiden von ihm verfassten Texte. Ob es sich bei den beiden Stücken tatsächlich auch um letzte Fassungen handelt, sei dahingestellt. Denn in einer seiner letzten mails schrieb er, dass ihm „noch etwas Interessantes zur Wahl dieses Terminus eingefallen" sei – gemeint war der Begriff „leap in being". Möglicherweise wird sich also in seinem Nachlass noch eine etwas mehr überarbeitete Fassung finden. An der Substanz der beiden Studien würde sich wohl nichts ändern, und vor allem sie ist es, die die Publikation der beiden Texte rechtfertigt.

In unseren Gesprächen hatten wir erwogen, den sachlichen Kontext, in dem die beiden Texte stehen, in einem kurzen Vorwort zu erläutern und zudem für das Paper nach einem Titel zu suchen, der ihre sachliche Zusammengehörigkeit zum Ausdruck bringt. Auf beides muss nun verzichtet werden. Stattdessen habe ich mich dazu entschlossen, die beiden Texte durch jenen Beitrag zu ergänzen, den Thomas Hollweck 1981 der von Sebba und mir herausgegebenen Voegelin-Festschrift beisteuerte. Dessen Titel „Truth and Relativity: On the Historical Emergence of Truth" verweist auf jene Problematik, die Ende der 40er Jahre zu einem zentralen Element der Geschichtsphilosophie Voegelins und damit von *Order and History* geworden war. Dass diese Problematik Thomas Hollweck auch weiterhin bewegte, zeigen seine Publikationen der folgenden Jahre und Jahrzehnte, und vielleicht war sie es auch, die den Anstoß zu seinem Entschluss gab, in der ihm noch verbleibenden Zeit ein Buch über diese Geschichtsphilosophie zu schreiben. Er hat dieses Vorhaben nicht mehr realisieren können. Aber wenn die folgenden beiden Studien auch nur erste Konturen des Projekts erkennen lassen, so zeigen sie doch, dass es ein wichtiges Buch geworden wäre – mehr als nur eine Rekonstruktion der Auffassungen Voegelins, nämlich jene kritische Auseinandersetzung mit ihnen, die er bei den meisten der vorliegende Arbeiten zu diesem Thema vermisste.

THOMAS HOLLWECK

TRUTH AND RELATIVITY: ON THE HISTORICAL EMERGENCE OF TRUTH*

Of all symbols, the symbol Truth is perhaps the one most difficult to grasp because it is the most complex. To get insight into its complexity, we must begin with an understanding of the process of symbolization itself. In Eric Voegelin's masterly description, "the process of symbolization is the attempt to make the essentially unknowable order of being intelligible as far as possible through the creation of symbols which interpret the unknown by analogy with the really, or supposedly, known."[1] The order of being is unknowable in its essence because man, the knower, is himself part of this order and thus does not have the choice of either knowing or not knowing this order somewhat as he can choose to know or not know a science, a craft, or a work of art. All men, even if they are merely mystified by the facts of their own existence – being born, growing up, aging, dying – are, as it were, condemned to know something of the order of being; on the other hand, not even the most heroic efforts to know can lead to more than partial knowledge at best; quite often they result in the constructions of speculative systems purporting to explain the whole, generated by a profound fear that ignorance would be worse than physical death. Man's ignorance concerning the whole order of being and consequently the essence of his own existence, fundamental as it is, does however not preclude his knowledge of other parts of the whole. There is indeed a progression of knowledge concerning the order of the phenomenal world accompanied by significant changes in the symbolization of man's partnership in the whole order of being. This progression of knowledge concerning the phenomenal world, however, does not change man's essential ignorance; its effects may, on the contrary, further deepen it. For it

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* *The Philosophy of Order. Essays on History, Consciousness and Politics.* Ed. by Peter J. Opitz and Gregor Sebba (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1981), 125–136.

[1] Eric Voegelin, *Israel and Revelation* (*Order and History – OH)*, 5.

easily leads man to believe that the expansion of knowledge concerning other parts of the whole constitutes an increase of knowledge concerning the whole and man's existence as part of it. This illusion is created by a misunderstanding of the process of symbolization. As pointed out earlier in quoting Voegelin's formulation, the symbol renders the essentially unknowable order of being intelligible through interpreting the unknown in analogy with the known, or supposedly known. The expansion of knowledge about the phenomenal world frequently coincides with a weakening in man's sensibility to his participation in the order of being. Or, as one can formulate it, intoxication with the known and knowable displaces the sense of the unknown and unknowable. In the course of this process the understanding of the essence of symbolization is being lost; one forgets that the inquisitive quality of consciousness is not only directed towards an external world of object, but also towards consciousness itself as mysterious "something" through which man as a part of being experiences himself as such: When this awareness is lost, symbolic knowledge appears to have become unnecessary in the face of an overwhelming world of objects. Yet the reality which is thus blocked out has not ceased to exist and it surfaces in vague but nonetheless overpowering feelings of anxiety, it manifests itself in neuroses, in the disjointed images of modern art, in the language of the imprisoned self, in short, as a wasteland of degraded symbols behind which it is at last recognized by thinkers of the caliber of Freud as "das Unheimliche". Consciousness, it becomes clear, is a complex process, not merely a cognitive instrument controlled by man's will, but one that continues its participation in the whole of reality even after man withdraws his attention from the area of participation and thrusts all of it into the cognition of the external world. When the participatory consciousness re-enters the field of man's cognitive attention, it reappears in the guise of the "unconscious", filled either with archetypes or, in the words of Freud, "a psychic primordial population" (psychische Urbe-völkerung).

The process of symbolization in which man charts the unknown as he travels through it on his frail ship is of course not always understood in the terms in which we described it. The insights which lead to the understanding of this process emerge slowly. Knowledge distinguishes the fields of reality and establishes structures of re-

lationships which can ultimately culminate in the Socratic paradox: I know that I don't know. In other words, knowledge itself is a symbol arising out of the conscious distinction between what is merely taken for granted, what is more or less strongly believed, what is thought to be true, and what is not or cannot be seen.

But have we not just entered a vicious circle? Can there be knowledge without the idea of truth, can there be truth without the idea of knowledge? Is the one possible without the other? We are tempted to say that without the idea of truth there would not be an idea of knowledge. But the structure of the process is not that simple. When we look at the Homeric epic, for instance, we find that the poet is acutely aware of the problems of knowledge, whereas he has no clear understanding yet of the relation between knowledge and truth.

When he calls on the Muses to help him tell the tale of the Trojan War or the voyages of Ulysses, he does so because he makes a distinction between human and divine knowledge. The epic poet cannot know what he is reporting, since he was not there when it happened. But the divine Muses know; the poet says to them: "You are present and have seen everything – we mortals hear only a rumor and know nothing."[2]

To know is to have seen; the Greek verb *eidenai*, "to know", literally means "to have seen." The limitations of man's knowledge is obvious; man cannot be everywhere in place and time. But the eternal gods are not bound by such limitations. There is only one road for man out of this dilemma, the one chosen by Homer, Hesiod, Parmenides, Xenophanes and others: to participate in the divine knowledge through opening one's human senses up to the divine. With the differentiation of knowledge into human and divine knowledge, the point of departure is, as always, the awareness of human existence as bound by the vastness of the uncharted territory of the whole. What is brought into focus in the present case is the actual limitation of man's ability to know, imposed on him by the physical conditions of his body in the world. At the same time there is the understanding of the limitation and the quest to go beyond it,

[2] *Iliad* II, 484 ff.

not for frivolous reasons of desire but out of a longing to participate in the lastingness of an order which is at first experienced as the opposite of man's mortality, divine immortality. Man's participation in a divine immortality can take, for instance, the form of the Homeric epic, which records the actions of gods and men and thus save them from being forgotten. The epic poem, before it becomes "literature", is primarily a vehicle for the transmission of knowledge. The Homeric epic, though, does not yet have the understanding that it must present itself as the "true" record of the actions of which it tells. It makes use of the equivalents for our words "true" and "truth" – eteos, etymos, etetymos, nemertes, alethes, aletheia – only to characterize statements made by its actors. But the truth of the poem as such is never called in question. This truth is, as it were, guaranteed by the Muses, for they have seen, and they have infallible memory. The poet, "even if he had ten tongues and ten mouths, an unbreakable voice, a brazen heart",[3] depends on the help of the Muses and thus divine and human knowledge are both present in the epic poem.

What must have happened in the relatively short period between the time of the Homeric epic and the life of Hesiod to account for the well-known lines at the beginning of the Theogony? "And one day they taught Hesiod glorious song while he was shepherding his lambs under holy Helicon, and this word first the goddesses said to me – the Muses of Olympus, daughters of Zeus who holds the aegis: 'Shepherds of the wilderness, mere bellies, we know, how to speak many false things as though they were true, but we know, when we will, to utter true things.'" (*idmen pseudea* polla legein etymoisin hamoia, idmen d', eut' ethelomen, alethea gerysasthai).[4] The truth of the epic tale has become questionable, and what is noteworthy above all is the fact that it is divine knowledge that is in need of legitimation. Homer's trusting prayer to the Muses implied that the human poet needed their assistance for his narration of the cosmic actions of gods and men, but once this assistance was present it would be a

[3] Cited after Bruno Snell: *Die Entdeckung des Geistes* (Göttingen 1975), 221 f. I owe the distinction between divine and human knowledge to the chapter „Menschliches und göttliches Wissen".

[4] *Theogony,* 26 ff.

truthful narration. At issue was the completeness of knowledge, truth as the unforgottenness of divine and human action within the cosmos. But Hesiod's poem had a different purpose which accounts for the insinuation that the Muses do not always tell the truth. The purpose is expressed in the repeated references to the Muses' songs, "telling of things that are and that shall be and that were aforetime."[5] What they tell Hesiod with their "immortal voice" is the tale of the gods "from the beginning," "ex arches", they sing of "Zeus, the father of gods and men", and of the "race of men and strong giants."[6] The song sung to Hesiod by the Muses tells of the establishment of the *dike* of Zeus; thus it represents new knowledge about the order of the cosmos, something that is emphatically stated through the form in which Hesiod at the beginning of *Theogony* speaks about the Muses who "praise Zeus the aegis-holder" and who "taught Hesiod glorious song." All poets of archaic Greece understood their art as a gift from the Muses, as Ernst Heitsch notes,[7] which makes it clear why Hesiod had to distinguish his kind of song from that of others, if, indeed, this song represented something new. What is new in Hesiod's *Theogony* is not the form in which his thought is communicated but the thought itself. This is all the more reason for the poet to guard against being mistaken for just another rhapsode and he does so by questioning the truth of other poetry. The important thing, though, is to be aware that Hesiod does not simply call the other poets liars but that he symbolizes the difference between the new and the old song through the divine freedom the Muses have to tell man the truth or to deceive him. The idea that men would deliberately lie about the order of reality is still unborn and will not become an issue until Plato's inquiries into the nature of sophistic thought. This point is of great importance, because it appears that the symbol of the Muses deceiving man is behind the formulations of early philosophical thought, the opposition of truth and doxa of which Parmenides and Xenophanes speak, and even the argument about the being or non-being of doxa in Plato's *Sophist*. Such continuity would of

[5] *Theogony*, 38 ff.

[6] *Theogony*, 43 ff.

[7] E. Heitsch, *Parmenides und die Anfänge der Erkenntniskritik und Logik* (Donauwörth 1979), 43 ff.

course not have existed if Hesiod had not expressed a fundamental understanding concerning the order of reality that could remain dominant for centuries to come, because it would require precisely the process of noetic philosophizing in the manner of Plato and Aristotle to go beyond such a notion which is perfectly valid within the primary experience of the cosmos. Before the discovery of the Psyche with its vision of the idea of the Good, Truth is a compact symbol, because there does not yet exist in man a sense, as it were, which would enable him to distinguish between Truth and that which has only the appearance of Truth. Man, to put it bluntly, is at the mercy of the Muses.

But we must return once more to Hesiod. The importance of this thought to the development of Truth as a symbol does not so much lie in his role as a thinker who reflects on the Truth. Rather, it lies in the direction Hesiod gives to the symbol when he uses it to set his kind of knowledge apart from that of other poets. We have said earlier that his *Theogony* represented something new. *Theogony*, the story of Zeus' victory over the older gods, tells of the battle between order and disorder and the birth of the forces permeating the new age of Zeus, Horae (Hours), Eunomia (Order), Dike (Justice), Eirene (Peace), and Moerae (Fates). In narrating this process, the story establishes a correlation between the new order and Truth, and it is the correlation which remains the binding pattern of thought through Parmenides, Xenophanes to Aeschylos, and ultimately to Plato and Aristotle.

It is not within the scope of this essay to analyze the mytho-speculate form of Hesiod's thought in detail. Here, we are only interested in the fact that the symbol Truth, through Hesiod, acquires a different and lasting quality. It is the quality of newness with its implications of new versus old knowledge, of the new just order, versus the old strife and injustice. After Hesiod, it becomes impossible to claim truth for the savage, subterranean forces which continue to play their parts in reality. They must be acknowledged but they are now clearly the lower, less true elements to be kept under the rule of the new forces of justice. When, in the centuries to follow, the noetic differentiation of reality occurs, it does not reverse this order, just as it

must not in the name of Truth neglect the presence of the "older" dark forces.

We have previously mentioned another problem emerging from the new direction which Hesiod gave to the symbol Truth. The Muses, we recall, say to Hesiod: "We know how to speak many false things as though they were true; but we know, when we will, to utter true things." These lines serve, first of all, the clear purpose of setting Hesiod's poetry apart from the works of other poets. They are not only directed against Homer but aim at the post-Homeric romances with their stereotypical treatment of heroic subjects. Against these Hesiod established his poem as the true account of highly important events. What demands our attention is the manner of Hesiod's rejection of contemporary romance. He does not blame the poets for saying false things but instead credits the divine Muses with the freedom to tell the truth or to lie. But he does not say it quite this way. He talks of the Muses speaking "many false things as though they were true." Hesiod's formulation could be the mark of an uncertainty about the nature of pseudos, the lie, an uncertainty which still colors the Homeric usage of the word, where as yet no clear difference is made between lie and error. What speaks against this is the fact that Hesiod is the first to coin the formulation of wilfully swearing a false oath. He appears to be aware of the difference between deliberate lying and not telling the truth for other reasons. Thus the phrase about "speaking many false things as though they were found true" seems to be meant as a precise description of the particular untruth found in the poetry criticized by Hesiod. Such poetry has the appearance of truth because as poetry it claims the authority of inspiration by the Muses, and is passed off as divine knowledge, which makes its untruth a very serious matter indeed, separating it from the ordinary lie. At the same time, the motives for the creation of this untrue kind of poetry are not sought in the poet's psyche – such a thing does not exist yet –, but are seen to lie in the structure of reality itself, notably in the divine part of reality. It is, therefore, an event in reality that the Muses, who in the new order of Zeus occupy a very prominent place, have chosen to put an end to their former deceptive habits and to reveal the truth to Hesiod.

It can be seen now why we have treated the evolution of the symbol Truth between the Homeric epic and Hesiod in some detail. With Hesiod's *Theogony*, the issues of the circularity of truth and knowledge have found their first cautious yet indelible expression. Its most important aspects is Hesiod's raising the question about the truth of divine knowledge in the context of a speculate construction in which cosmic reality is seen as a historical process leading from a dark beginning to a present of order and justice. Without a doubt, Hesiod's poem is to be understood as true in the sense that it represents new knowledge about the whole cosmos. The older forms of knowledge have consequently become less true. The new knowledge has become possible as a result of the cosmic process itself; the Muses have decided to tell a man the truth about the process, in which they themselves represent the new order of the present. Hesiod, the man, could not have discovered the new truth on his own; the time for this discovery has simply arrived as the Muses approach the shepherds, those "mere bellies" of the beginning of the *Theogony*. Someone who has received such revelations as Hesiod, would of course, not be a "mere belly" afterwards.

The symbol Truth, as our analysis shows, is developed within the context of mythical thought. It becomes a symbol at the moment when a thinker becomes conscious of creating a myth that has not existed before him, a myth that reflects the structure of reality more adequately than previous myths. But the thinker does not yet possess the reflective language to show in what sense his new myth is more adequate then the older ones. None the less he expresses this thought, but he expresses it in mythical language, and his word for it is "Truth". Thus, from the beginning, Truth is charged with a meaning that reflects experience which will only gradually be differentiated into the noetic knowledge of the soul as the center of man's participation in reality, a reality whose structure emerges in the process of thought.

It is essentially mythical quality that makes Truth such a complex symbol. A permanent vestige of myth, it projects into history, always reminding us that our knowledge about reality is not absolute but relative, in the sense of being more or less adequate. If this seems to be a contradiction in terms at first, it is because the mythical com-

pactness of the symbol Truth remains present throughout the historical process of differentiating the structure of reality. Knowledge is true insofar as it illuminates reality; the illumination of reality, however, is not a one-time task comparable to turning on a light. It is a process unfolding in time, and the human beings who knowingly participate in this process exhibit a greater or smaller awareness. The awareness of reality being an on-going process of illumination is itself knowledge structuring reality under the symbol of history. Beginning and end of this process remain forever unknown, but the process does have the structure of "earlier" and "later". Truth, as has been shown, is originally chosen as the symbol which expresses the thinker's awareness of this structure. But the symbol places too strong an emphasis on something being so and not otherwise; in other words, it involves the danger of arresting the very movement it is meant to symbolize. The common-sense everyday meaning of speaking the truth existed before the symbol came into existence. And in an everyday sense, the word truth quite properly emphasizes the unchanging correspondence between statement and fact.

To Hesiod and the early Greek thinkers reality was not simply a bundle of facts to be known by man as "true." This is, after all, the central issue of their thinking. Parmenides, who seems to have patterned his poem known by the title "Truth" after Hesiod's *Theogony*, proclaims the identity of being and thinking. This is hardly the thought of someone who is interested in facts as we understand the word. Parmenides understands his poem as the Truth of Being. The goddess herself tells him that he will learn everything, "both the unwavering heart of well-rounded Truth (aletheises eukykleos atremes etor) and also the opinions of mortals in which there is no true fidelity (pistis alethes)."[8] The goddess teaches Parmenides "the way of persuasion which goes with truth." The man who chooses the way of truth finds the "is" and he finds that it is possible not to be. While Hesiod's Muses knew the truth and could choose to tell it to mortals, Parmenides' goddess *is* the Truth and she

[8] *Parmenides*, Fragment 1, 29 f. [My transl.] I relied on the discussion of Parmenides' language by Alexander P.D. Mourelatos, *The Route of Parmenides: A Study of Word, Image, and Arguments in the Fragment* (New Haven and London, 1970).

cannot choose to tell it or lie. Thus, the Truth of Parmenides' poem is the Logos of Being, because one cannot speak the Truth of not-Being. Nevertheless, the goddess also tells her adept about Doxa, appearance, but she warns that she has come to the end of the faithful Logos and thought "all around truth (amphis aletheies)."[9] From now on he will hear the "deceptive order of my words (kosmon emon epeon apatelon)"[10] through which he will learn about the delusions of mortals.

The identity of Truth and Being, Being and Reality in Parmenides' poem gives a direction to the development of the symbol Truth which is as important as that previously taken by Hesiod. Parmenides' poem adds to the complexity of the symbol because it is radically anti-mythical. Truth is not any longer understood as the Truth of the process, as had been the case in Hesiod's poem; instead, it has become the Truth of the unchanging "Is." It is not the Truth *about* reality, a truth that could be told as a tale, it is the Truth of reality a Being, a truth that can ultimately be stated in the one word "Is." Parmenides' Truth comes as the end of the mystical transport away from the realm of Doxa, illusion. It is impossible to speak the Truth about the realm of Doxa, because one cannot know it. One can try to explain the realm of Doxa, but one will at best arrive at a half-truth in doing so. It seems to us that here lies the radical break with myth which we have mentioned. For myth, there is no distinction between Being and Doxa, because reality has the form of Doxa as the tale of cosmic events with a time structure of earlier and later. The mythical tale is true insofar as it describes the process as a whole, inspired by divine knowledge. Parmenides, on the other hand, while also reporting divine knowledge, denies the reality of the process. Divine knowledge is the knowledge that distinguishes between the reality of unchanging Being and the unreality of the process. The Way of Truth is the way out of the unreality of the process.

The role of the symbol Truth in the break with myth has had immense historical consequences. The equation of Truth with unchanging, eternal knowledge, with the changeless certainty of Being

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[9] *Parmenides*, Fragment 1, 50 f.

[10] Ibid., 51 f.

has been the primary issue of philosophy ever since, leading to the neglect of the structure of the process which had been thrown out by Parmenides as Doxa. One could characterize Plato's philosophy as one continuous struggle to break out of the intellectual apories arising out of the Parmenidian truth of the identity of knowledge and Being. In the *Theatetus* and the *Sophist*, Plato shows that the two major doctrines, the Heraclitean doctrine of the flux of all things and the Eleatic doctrine of Being, do not enable us to understand the nature of knowledge. The problem of knowledge remains unresolved until it is taken beyond these doctrines, and Plato does this through the reintroduction of myth. Although he shares Parmenides' concern for the immutability of Truth anchored in the immutability of Being, Plato does not follow Parmenides in the radical separation between Being and Doxa, because he clearly perceives that the structure of reality reduced to Being alone leaves the existential power of Doxa ultimately unaccounted for. The disciple of Socrates in his battle against the sophistic Doxa is too much aware of the real force of this Doxa to exempt it from the process of knowledge. What is more, Plato's philosophizing has its beginning in the tension between knowledge and ignorance, a beginning not simply left behind, as it is in the mystical transport of Parmenides, but ever present in the philosophic quest. Thus it structures the quest itself, which in the Allegory of the Cave of the *Republic* is shown as the "periagoge", the turning around from the shadow images of the cave to the vision of sun and the subsequent return to the cave. In leading up to the myth of the cave, Plato takes great care to clarify his symbols. "The Sun is not vision, but it is the cause of vision and also is seen by the vision it causes."[11] And about the correspondence between the visible and invisible: "It was the Sun, then, that I meant when I spoke of that offspring which the Good has created in the visible world, to stand there in the same relation to vision and visible things as that which the Good itself bears in the intelligible world to intelligence and to intelligible objects."[12] The analogies Plato draws

[11] Plato, R*epublic* 508 B. I am following Cornford's translation with minor changes based on my reading of the Greek text and the commentary in James Adam, ed., *The Republic of Plato* (Cambridge 1902; 1963).

[12] *Republic* 508 B.

between the Sun and the Good (helios, agathon), vision and intelligence (opsis, nous), and visible things and intelligible objects (horomena, noumena) form in themselves the theory of symbollization needed to account for the truth of knowledge concerning the process of reality as a whole, thus overcoming Parmenides' radical break between Being and Doxa. Plato can now draw the new conclusion: "This then, which gives to the objects of knowledge their truth and to him who knows them his power of knowing, is the idea of the Good. It is the cause of knowledge and truth (aitian d'epistemes ousan kai aletheias); and so, while you may think of it as an object of knowledge, you will be right in thinking that it is something other and even more beautiful than truth and knowledge. And, just as in our analogy light and vision were to be thought of as like the Sun, but not identical with it, so here both knowledge and truth are to be regarded as like the Good, but to identify either with the Good is wrong. The Good must hold a yet higher place of honor."[13] It is very important to avoid any confusion about Plato's analogies. The Sun corresponds to the Idea of the Good; Light corresponds to Truth; opsis, the faculty of sight corresponds to nous, the faculty of Reason. Only if we follow Plato's distinctions carefully do we see that he has clearly parted ways with Parmenides and the long-standing identification of Truth with Reality. But neither does he equate Truth with knowledge. Instead, his analogy between Light and Truth is aimed at showing that Truth is the intermediary between the transcendent Good and the soul, the seat of knowledge. In order to show this, we have to go back and fill in the two remaining pieces of the analogy which we have left out: "You know what happens when the colors of things are no longer irradiated by the daylight, but only by the fainter luminaries of the night: when you look at them, the eyes are dim and seem almost blind, as if there were no vision in them. But when you look at things on which the Sun is shining, the same eyes see distinctly and it becomes evident that they do contain the power of vision." "Certainly." "Apply this comparison then to the soul. When its gaze is fixed upon an object irradiated by truth and being (aletheia te kai to on), the soul gains understanding and knowledge and is manifestly in possession of intelligence. But when

[13] Ibid.

it looks towards that twilight world of things that come into existence and pass away, its sight is dim and it has only opinions and beliefs which shift to and fro, and now it seems like a thing that has no intelligence."[14]

We have called Truth the intermediary between the transcendent Good and the soul. In this passage we can see that Plato attributes the same status to Truth and Being (aletheia, to on); but this does not exhaustively describe the structure of reality for him, for the structure is grounded in the transcendent Good which, as he says later, gives to the objects of knowledge "their being and essence (to einai te kai ten ousian)."[15] And he concludes: "The Good is not the same thing as being, but beyond being, surpassing it in dignity and power."[16] At the same time the Good is compared to the Sun which not only makes the things we see visible, but also gives them their generation (genesis), growth and nourishment; but the Sun is not genesis itself. In this extremely carefully constructed analogy, Plato unravels the difficulties which had arisen when Truth became the central symbol of knowledge in Parmenides' reaction to Ionian nature speculation. But it would be wrong to look at Plato's analogy merely as a construction. For it is based on a completely new insight, that into the absolute transcendence of the Good. Without the experience of the Beyond, the analogy could not have been constructed. The place of Truth in the analogy as in between the Good and the soul is of central importance, not only to our present analysis, but also to Plato's philosophical theory. Truth is that which illuminates reality, but it is not itself the cause of his illumination. It comes from the unknown, unknowable transcendent Good. Plato's theory of Truth retains formally the structure of Hesiod's myth by letting Truth originate in something Divine, just as Hesiod's Truth originates in the Muses. Yet Plato's Divine is a transcendent one which cannot become the object of mytho-speculation as Hesiod's Muses could, who were members of the same cosmos as the men whose songs they inspired. Plato's Truth is essentially that which

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[14] *Republic* 508 C.

[15] *Republic* 508 B.

[16] Ibid.

helps man separate the knowable from the unknowable and for this reason it will not allow subjecting the unknowable to speculation.

Plato's theory of Truth is not limited to the analogy set forth in the *Republic*. In order to deal with it exhaustively one would have to describe at length the philosophical quest of which it is an integral part. Here it must suffice to stress that the theory of Truth is grounded in the experience of knowledge as the movement between Doxa and the transcendent Really Real. Thus Plato breaks the circle of truth and knowledge which we have discussed earlier. It is not enough to say that knowledge is only knowledge if it is true, because knowledge always finds its boundary at the Divine Beyond. In the language of myth we could say that Truth is that which is revealed by the gods and knowledge is man's perception of reality in the light of the revealed Truth, a light which man cannot force to shine upon reality. Plato is the first to differentiate Truth and knowledge, because he discovers the psyche as the locus of knowledge. The symbolism of the vision of reality illuminated by the light of Truth originating in the Beyond is unthinkable without the discovery of the psyche, because it is the psyche which is that part in man that corresponds to the Divine Beyond where it has its own origin. In a mythical cosmos, in which gods and men lived side by side, there was no need for a special sensorium in man through which knowledge of the cosmic process could be obtained. The words of the gods sufficed. Yet we also saw that these words were not always true. Parmenides later attempted to remedy this precarious situation by having two realms, that of Being or Truth and that of Doxa, and by saying that knowledge was identical with Being, thus leaving the realm of Doxa in complete darkness. Plato, while not denying the basic separation of Truth and Doxa, sees the two linked in the experience of the metaxy, the oscillating between ignorance and knowledge. He develops the myth of anamnesis to explain this oscillation process. In the *Phaedrus* he tells the myth of the "hyperouranion" and he stresses that he is telling the truth, because he is speaking about Truth, and the origin of true knowledge (to tes alethous epistemes genos).[17] The souls ride their chariots along the top of the sky, thus being able to see the true reality of the transcendent

[17] Plato, *Phaedrus* 427 C.

"hyperouranion." Not all souls manage to stay on an even path; many drive in an up and downward motion and only catch an occasional glimpse of the "hyperouranion", others never reach a course which would enable them to see. These souls are then incarnated in human bodies and their relative successes or failures to reach the vision account for the differences in human understanding.

This myth completes the theory of Truth; it not only explains why true knowledge is not obtained by all humans, but also why not everybody remains in the ignorance of Doxa. We see in this the crowning of Plato's theory of Truth, because it addresses itself to the fundamental question why there is a need for the distinction between Truth and Doxa at all. If we are all human and if all of us live in the same reality, we all ought to be given the same awareness of reality and nobody would even be able not to know the truth of reality. It is, however, the fundamental experience of all men that this is not the case, and it is for this reason that there even arises the symbol Truth long before it is philosophically reflected upon. Mythical speculation had left it to the divine Muses to tell the truth to some men and not to others. Early philosophical speculation posited two radically separate realms, but left unexplained why some men are chosen to know the Truth, while others forever remain in the realm of Doxa. Plato's theory of Truth is born out of the insight that one cannot speak about Truth without speaking about the problem of man who either knows or does not know Truth.

In the title of this essay, we seem to allude to the possibility that Truth could be relative. This is indeed the case, but the idea that Truth is relative must not be misconstrued. It does not imply that true is as true pleases, that what is true for one may not be true for another. When we establish a relation between Truth and relativity, we are clearly in opposition to the idea that Truth is absolute, meaning that its form in history is unchanging. For what we have attempted to show is that the very notion of Truth is historical from its mythical beginnings. The symbol Truth exists for the reason that man does not experience himself as living in certainty. This is why Truth becomes the essential symbol in Greek thought which embodies the dual experience of reality as changing and unchanging. As Plato once speaks in the *Timaeus* of time as the moving image of eternity, thus

one could seak of Truth as the moving image of unchanging being. The relativity of Truth might better be called historicity of Truth.

The Divine Beyond is what it is, and it does not change because we who seek it live in the flux of time. But as it irrupts into the flux of time, it irrupts at different moments, in different souls, and thus it cannot always appear the same, though it is in reality the same. The “really Real”, the Divine Beyond, may manifest itself in sudden insights concerning the structure of time, it will itself be experience as true, but it will also shed the light of truth on the temporal process and thus lead to knowledge of its structure, be it scientific knowledge, historical knowledge, or the knowledge expressed in works of art, which are “true” for the same reason that other forms of human thought are true.

THOMAS A. HOLLWECK

COSMOS AND THE "LEAP IN BEING" IN VOEGELIN'S PHILOSOPHY*

> For all things outside the physical world language can be employed only as a sort of adumbration, but never with even approximate exactitude, since in accordance with the physical world it treats only of possession and its connotations.
>
> Franz Kafka,
> *Reflections on Sin, Pain, Hope, and the True Way*
> Aphorism 55

1. Introduction

Of the key terms to be found in *Order and History* signifying certain epochal changes in humanity's participation in the process of reality, the most prominent and perhaps most misunderstood one is the "leap in being." In the context of the highly theoretical prose of Voegelin's *magnum opus*, the "leap in being" stands out as a term obviously intended to illuminate something that seems to have resisted the author's analysis, which in his own words is supposed to "follow empirically the patterns of meaning as they revealed themselves in the self-interpretations of persons and societies in history."[18] In my paper I want, therefore, to take a closer look at the term "leap in being" and pose the question if there is indeed a break in Voegelin's hermeneutical effort of translating "the meaning of self-interpretation into the language of rational discourse."[19] (Gebhardt, 2008, 12) And if it should turn out that the "leap in being" does in fact signify such a break, the question will have to be asked what the reason for this break may be, that is, whether it signifies a possible

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[18] Eric Voegelin, *CW* 17, 106.

[19] Jürgen Gebhardt, Political Thought in an Intercivilizational Perspective: A Critical Reflection, in: *The Review of Politics* 70 (2008), 12.

defect in Voegelin's hermeneutical analysis or whether it points to an "ontological fissure," as I would provisionally call it, that may be suggested by the term "leap in being" itself.

Although commentators on Voegelin's work make frequent reference to the "leap in being," there appears to be a reluctance to go beyond a definition of the term, a reluctance that extends even to the editors' introductions of the first two volumes of *Order and History* in the *Collected Works*. Yet already in 1956, shortly after the publication of *Israel and Revelation*, Alfred Schütz told his friend Voegelin in a letter: "There are many points that I would like to question you about. I would like to hear more about the 'leap in being'," and again in June 1957: "I have difficulties with the concepts of 'compactness' and 'differentiation'; I would like to hear more about the theory of the 'leap in being', especially about the relationship of this concept with 'attunement', and to the various forms of Metastasis – all this in connection with the extremely exciting theory of time that you have developed."[20] The connection made by Schütz regarding these key concepts and Voegelin's "exciting theory of time" is once again proof of this "silent partner's philosophical perspicacity, as my subsequent analysis will show. Regrettably, Voegelin's responses to these questions seem to have been given in personal conversations with Schütz. The only one to take the bull by the horns was Gregor Sebba who devoted an entire segment of his seminal article "Prelude and Variations on the Theme of Eric Voegelin" to a critical discussion of the "leap in being."[21] Sebba had an eye for problems that are often easily overlooked by the interpreters of a thinker's "message," something that is especially vexing in the case of Voegelin's work, and he pointed out that the "leap" appeared to him to be an interesting parallel to the "quantum leap" of twentieth century physics. In physics, the term "quantum leap" is usually defined as "a change of an electron within an atom

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[20] Alfred Schütz, letters dated October 21, 1956 and June 26, 1957. Both appear in the forthcoming edition of the Schütz – Voegelin correspondence, translated by William Petropulos, University of Missouri Press.

[21] Gregor Sebba, Prelude and Variations on the Theme of Eric Voegelin, in: Ellis Sandoz, ed., *Eric Voegelin's Thought. A Critical Appraisal* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1982), 3–65.

from one energy state to the next. This is a discontinuous change in which the electron goes from one energy level to another without passing through any intermediate levels." Voegelin, who had already told Ellis Sandoz in the conversations which were to become the *Autobiographical Reflections* that he took the term from Kierkegaard – I will discuss this in detail in the main part of my paper – did not give much credit to the parallel, opposed as he was in principle to metaphorical comparisons between disparate ontological areas. Sebba, for his part, was quite content with this lack of auctorial endorsement, since his primary focus was on the fact that the "leap in being" signifies discontinuity, that is, the absence of a "gradual transition from level to level."[22] But even Sebba only touches on this critical aspect of the leap when he argues that "in modern Western historiography and scholarship the three Western breaks (Israel, Hellas, and Christianity; TAH) did not go unobserved, but too many interpretations gradualize them into 'transitions' from polytheism to monotheism, from myth or religion to philosophy or thought, etc., without recognizing the 'transitions' as epoch-making breaks."[23] This point is precisely the crux of Voegelin's "discovery", as Sebba calls it, and it must be moved to the center of any serious analysis of the meaning of the "leap in being," together with the question whether the leap was really a "discovery," as Sebba claims, or whether Voegelin's term is itself to be understood as a further "differentiation" of consciousness.[24] A discussion of the "leap in being," therefore, must be conducted in full recognition of the possibility that the break in the continuity of man's existence in time is a sudden fusion of being and consciousness in the sense that the structure of reality has undergone a change that cannot be described in the symbolic language of what Voegelin calls the "primary experience of the cosmos" but requires an entirely new symbolic

[22] Sebba, 30, n. 52.

[23] Sebba, 31.

[24] There is good reason to be critical of Sebba's idea of a "discovery" in light of a comment Voegelin made to Schütz regarding Bruno Snell's well-known book *The Discovery of the Mind* where he says: "The discovery, or better the differentiation of the Soul, is the most important event in the history of the human race; it took place in all the higher civilizations between 800 and 300 B.C." Letter dated October 7, 1951.

language that may even have to go beyond the hermeneutic principle as I have presented it earlier in Jürgen Gebhardt's formulation. Here lies the reason for my revisiting a question that had for all practical purposes been answered. Why not be content with the symbolic pair of "compactness and differentiation," why not accept the terminology of the "breakthroughs," complete or incomplete, as the case may be, and why try to breathe new life into a term that Voegelin himself seems to have favored less and less, after having employed it in the first two volumes of *Order and History*? There, Voegelin's concern had been with the unique moments when concrete human beings experienced something that disrupted the continuity of their cosmic consubstantiality, something that was not *of* the cosmos, while in his later work he increasingly focused on the process of history as a "movement of reality from the apeirontic depth to man" and the "countermovement of creative organization from the divine height down, with the Metaxy of man's consciousness as the site where the movement of the Whole becomes luminous for its eschatological direction,"[25] as formulated in the conclusion to *The Ecumenic Age.*

2. Cosmos and Consciousness

I will begin this section with a point of clarification. This discussion of the "leap in being" is not intended as an exegesis of a philosophical or theological *topos* that will result in a precise definition of its meaning, but as an interpretative approximation of the field of experiences in which this term becomes endowed with meaning. So far, I have even refrained from calling the "leap in being" either a "symbol" or a "concept," to say nothing of such labels as "idea" or "conception." I prefer the image of "encircling" the meaning of the "leap in being" by making present the narrower and wider context in which Voegelin uses the term. Consequently, we must begin with the *Introduction* to *Israel and Revelation*, which, apart from being one of Voegelin's literary masterpieces, is his quintessential statement on the nature of the cosmic order of reality, as is indicated by the title "The Symbolization of Order." Let us recall the key elements of this

[25] *CW* 17, 409.

symbolization of the cosmic order of reality. "Man, in his existence, participates in being," but this participation is not to be misunderstood as a statement about a connection between two objects, man and being. "There is, rather" Voegelin clarifies, "a 'something', a part of being, capable of experiencing itself as such, and furthermore capable of using language and calling this experiencing consciousness by the name of 'man'."[26] Voegelin calls this an act of "evocation," which, fundamental as it is, "is not itself an act of cognition." It is important to examine this particular part of Voegelin's argument regarding the primary experience and man's knowledge of the cosmos and himself as a partner in the cosmos for the simple reason that it represents the recognition of the "ground of being" as "beyond" the cosmos, but not necessarily beyond the experiencing consciousness. Voegelin's assertion that the "something" is capable of experiencing itself as part of being and thus differentiates itself from the other parts of being as the "man-thing," as I would call it, is an act of *evocation* and not of *cognition* invites some critical reflection. Granted, in the context in which Voegelin makes this assertion, the emphasis is on the existential Socratic ignorance, and the point Voegelin is making is that even by differentiating himself from the whole of the "community of being," man has not gained any essential knowledge about himself, since "knowledge of the whole…is precluded by the identity of the knower with the partner, and ignorance of the whole precludes essential knowledge of the part."[27] If one, however, shifted the emphasis from man's essential ignorance to his imaginative exploration of the reality of which he is part, that is, the various strata of inorganic matter, plant life, animals, other human societies, one might come to the conclusion that, going back to Paleolithic and Neolithic, since "prehistory" man has searched for a common bond with the other partners in being and, as in the case of Shamanism, discovered a common spirit with animals and has consequently been able to take the next step of symbolic abstraction, the idea of a shared invisible reality that was to become accessible to the common sensorium, the "soul." In other words, the knowledge that man imaginatively "creates" within the cosmos embracing him

[26] *CW* 14, 40.

[27] Ibid.

and everything else is a millennial process that stretches from the human beginnings into an eschatological future in the mode of presence. The primary experience is the matrix of human participation in reality. Voegelin clearly understood this at the time of composing the first three volumes of *Order and History*, but I would argue that in those earlier parts of his work he shifted the emphasis toward the eschatological, because he was concerned with the epochal event of the creation of history more than with the gradualism of man's exploration of reality, as I had already intimated in the introductory part of this paper.

It needs to be understood that the description Voegelin gives of the primary experience of the cosmos in volumes I and II of *Order and History*, as well as the theoretical analysis given in the chapter "Historiogenesis" of volume IV, primarily addresses its later civilizational manifestations in Mesopotamia and Egypt, a conscious limitation that reflects Voegelin's original hermeneutical methodology of relying primarily on written evidence for the self-interpretation of the individuals and societies. Thus, the cosmological societies whose symbolic orders Voegelin initially investigated are either part of the "axial age" or immediately precede it.[28] As we know, Voegelin's later research led him into the direction of non-literate symbolizations of the cosmos and its participating partners and an understanding that the term "cosmological" required some conceptual refinement, for, as he wrote to Marie König: "This term can still be used, but it is impossible to separate the cosmological from the imperial elements."[29] In the planned book *The Drama of Humanity*, that some refer to as "Volume Zero," Voegelin intended to treat this difference in a systematic form. "In a further work that I am now working on I want to include a section on prehistory in which the specific difference between the symbols in their prehistoric form and the form in which they appear in the imperial civilizations is made clear."[30] What Voegelin believed to have found in

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[28] I use the term "axial age" in the broader neo-Weberian sense of S.N. Eisenstadt's studies, and am deliberately refraining from a discussion of Voegelin's critique of Jaspers' original concept.

[29] Letter dated October 14, 1968, in *CW* 30, 577.

[30] Letter to Marie König, dated September 28, 1970, in *CW* 30, 669.

his studies of Paleolithic, Mesolithic, and Neolithic societies and research done by Marie König, Carl Hentze for prehistoric China, and Giorgio di Santillana and Hertha von Dechend's *Hamlet's Mill*, he formulated succinctly in a sentence addressed to Jürgen Gebhardt: "When you look at a work like the new one by de Santillana and Hertha von Dechend, *Hamlet's Mill*, the permanence of the structure of human consciousness is now secure at least as far as the beginning of the Neolithic age, so that all the problems of evolution are now reinterpreted into genuine historical problems of differentiation of the compact conscious-ness."[31]

I do not think I am overstating the case when I call this statement one of the key formulations of Voegelin's theory of consciousness, which has tremendous implications for anyone who is serious about the nature of consciousness and the question of compactness and differentiation. Voegelin's conclusions, based on such phenomena as abstract grids in the cave drawings preceding representations of sacred animals, result in the rejection of the notion of an evolution of consciousness in *homo sapiens.* This requires a brief digression, because it is of the utmost importance for any serious analysis of both Voegelin's concept of the "primary experience of the cosmos " and the "leap in being." Evolution is to be understood in the words of the Swiss biologist Adolf Portmann as an open series of "barely perceptible mutations," devoid of any content, that ultimately led to the development of the spiritual-intellectual nature of man. Voegelin, who spoke with Portmann on several occasions, shared this understanding and agreed with Portmann's thesis that "with the realization of the human form of existence we do not simply have another complex kind of mammal, but an entirely new form of life, a new stage of life, higher than that of animals with respect of its degree of internality, i.e., its experience of the world and its impact on the world."[32] Portmann's key point mirrors Voegelin's ontological position in one sentence, which I will quote in German: "Die Menschwerdung umfasst die Entstehung aller Erscheinungen der Geschichtlichkeit als eines neuen Naturphänomens." ("Anthro-pogenesis comprehends the

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[31] Letter to Jürgen Gebhardt, dated November 24, 1970, in *CW* 30, 684.

[32] Adolf Portmann, Das Ursprungsproblem, in: *Biologie und Geist* (Frankfurt a.M.: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1982), 70 f. [My transl.]

coming into being of all phenomena of historicity as a new natural phenomenon.")[33] The particular mode of human development is not "a simple continuation of organic evolution, but a whole new form of coming to terms with the task of life, and we know it as the sphere of history."[34] Voegelin clearly understood the proximity between his own philosophical anthropology and that of Portmann, as he indicated in a letter written shortly after a visit with Portmann in Basel in 1970. "His [Portmann's] evidence that a theory of evolution that is focused on the survival values of the attributes of species completely overlooks the problem of species attributes that have no possible utilitarian value as signals or survival conditions, but are the pure self-expression of species and individual, seems to be theoretically particularly valuable. Especially in his views on this point I have the impression that Portmann is something like a contemplative mystic, whose contemplation is directed to forms of life. So that is very gratifying."[35] What Voegelin sees as Portmann's mysticism is the exact opposite to the reductionist scientism that treats the phenomenon of life as a closed system of chemo-physical processes along the idea of a "God gene." Portmann represents an understanding of the phenomenon of life shared already by the young Voegelin who wrote in *The History of the Race Idea* as early as 1933: "A 'theory of evolution' can never do anything more than point out the external circumstances under which one form changes into another; nothing can explain the fact that a substance exists that has form or is capable of changing into another – here we confront the phenomenon we must accept unexplained. All attempts at explanation are fueled by the desire to reduce the phenomenon of life to a law of inorganic nature – or, to put it ontologically: they deny the reality of life and see only inanimate matter as the one primary phenomenon that has to explain all other phenomena."[36] Since Voegelin wrote these sentences, the study of the basic genetic make-up of life forms has of course advanced immensely, and yet the phenomenon of life remains unexplained. I do of course not mean to imply that any theory of

[33] Ibid.

[34] Ibid., 71.

[35] Letter to Manfred Henningsen, dated November 12, 1970, in *CW* 30, 675.

[36] *CW* 30, 20.

"intelligent design" can fill the void and "explain" what is precisely that which must remain unexplained, for, as Voegelin cogently argued: "The desire for an 'explanation' of the phenomenon arises when it is no longer seen itself, when the eyes have become blind to the event of an autonomous unfolding of the living substance…"[37]

I regard the connection between the ability to "see" the "event of an autonomous unfolding of the living substance" and man's existence in the primary experience of the cosmos as the great underrated aspect of Voegelin's philosophy of existence and consciousness. This may at least in part have to do with the conceptual language of "compactness" and "differentiation," which seems to place the emphasis on such events of transcending man's cosmological habitat in the "leap in being" and the "complete" or "incomplete breakthroughs," but the fact remains that the spectrum of human consciousness is always fully present in man's experience of the cosmos. And that includes the mystical. Manfred Henningsen was again the addressee of what one could consider one of Voegelin's most lucid formulations of the issue in a letter written in 1969: "An addendum on human nature in Plato and Paul. I can now, after the analysis of the depth, formulate the problem better. Not only the nous and the passions of the 'synthetic nature' belong to human nature, but also the cosmic primary experience (primordial field of reality); the experience of human existence as mediated by society; the historical process of finding truth in society; as well as the possibilities for deformation of person, society, and history."[38] The cosmic primary experience, i. e., the "primordial field of reality" is part of human nature and not something that is just a stage on the path to a more and more differentiated consciousness of reality, which would be classic Hegelian gnosis. This was the fundamental problem that Voegelin had to work out in the "Equivalences" paper, and the symbolism of "depth" and "height." To the mysticism of the depth corresponds a mysticism of height. During the intense preoccupation with these questions in the summer of 1969, Voegelin arrived at insights into the nature of experience – and that ultimately means

[37] Ibid.

[38] Letter to Manfred Henningsen, dated June 20/22, 1969, in *CW* 30, 605.

"mystical" experience -, which he was more able to express adequately in the medium of the personal letter than the formal essay. Manfred Henningsen became the preferred addressee of Voegelin's reflections at the time, and thus we find only three weeks after the remarks on the primary experience a description of two basic types of mystical experience that puts to rest any notion that the so-called breakthroughs or leaps in being permit a progressive interpretation parallel to a Schellingian theogononic speculation or a Hegelian dialectical process of consciousness. Here is the passage:

> It is quite clear in Plato that the depth of the soul is brought into a relationship of "affinity" with the divine depth of the cosmos. Does the depth now dissolve into the mystic's experience of God? I don't think so. With the dissolution of the cosmos into the world and the transcendent God, the experience of the God of "height" is clearly differentiated - it is revelation, not a drawing out from the "depth" of the psyche. Rudolf Otto saw in *West-Oestliche Mystik*, the problem of two types of Indian mysticism, even though he failed linguistically in the attempt to differentiate the types: There is a "mysticism of the soul" (type yoga) and a "mysticism of God" (type sankara). One could say, linguistically clearly, that the mysticism of the "height" is a partial experience of God that at least moves towards the dissolution of the cosmos, if it does not exactly presuppose it, while the mysticism of the soul of the "depth" is another partial experience that in principle does not dissolve the cosmos. The two types of experience cannot be reduced to one another because man (1) is not a man of the world that stands opposite the transcendent God (that would be a world hypostasis), (2) is not, as a being of the world, owner of a God-seeking psyche that was placed upon the body from outside (gnostic hypostasis), but rather (3) in his essence as bodily existence is on a search in his soul for the truth. In so far as transcendent being is present in the questioning knowledge and the knowing questioning of bodily existence, God is in the world, and God's being-in-the-world, I believe, is what one calls cosmos. The persistence of pantheistic metaphysics, Platonic and neo-Platonic anima mundi, etc. can be traced back to this experience of divine presence in a bodily being's psychic [seelisch] search. Cosmologic and transcendent-revelatory theologies would be two basic types of speculative extrapolation each of which are tied to concrete experiences.[39]

[39] *CW* 30, 613 f.

What justifies this long quote is the fact that Voegelin a) develops there the key notion that mysticism is present in the primary experience as the mysticism of the divine depth of the cosmos and b) shows that the mysticism of the "height" is in principle already a move towards the "dissolution of the cosmos," an experience that in my estimation must have been present at least in rudimentary form in those human beings that experienced the "leap in being," as I will argue in the next section of this paper. The reasons Voegelin gives for the irreducibility of the one form of mysticism to the other are intimately linked to his anthropology and its insistence that the body-soul or body-mind symbolisms are hypostases that hinder rather than further our understanding of human existence defined as "partnership in the community of being" in openness to the ground of being that is later discovered to be "world-transcendent." The problem of the difference between the two forms of mysticism can be stated with even greater precision if we include, as Voegelin did, the discussion of non-Western mysticism such a R. C. Zaehner's *Mysticism. Sacred and Profane* (1957) In the fall of 1964, while being on his regular visiting semester at Notre Dame, Voegelin bought Zaehner's book and reported to Henningsen that the book had made him aware of the differences in types of mysticism. Zaehner distinguished there between "monistic" and "theistic" mysticism as the major types, where the former is primarily equated with nature mysticism manifesting itself for instance in Zen Buddhism, the pan-en-henic experienced produced by Yoga techniques, and Western forms of nature mysticism for which he uses the examples of Proust and Rimbaud. Theistic mysticism, on the other hand, can only be found in the great Christian and Islamic mystical visions and is ultimately seen by Zaehner as the only form of sacred mysticism. What is worthy of note is that Voegelin in his remarks to Henningsen does not even mention Zaehner's primary concern in writing the book. What Voegelin was interested in is the distinction itself, with the result that he characterizes Zaehner's "monistic" mysticism "as the experience of consubstantiality (not using this term) with nature," and "theistic mysticism as consubstantiality with God."[40] What Voegelin was further interested in was an idea he was developing in

[40] Letter to Manfred Henningsen, dated December 26, 1964, in *CW* 30.

the context of his studies on the Ecumenic Age, the idea that monistic mysticism in ecumenical cultures "articulates itself as identification of the I with a universe that is not identical with any one of the contents of the cosmos, and also not with gods in the polytheistic sense."[41] In his opinion, Zaehner failed to see that this monistic experience might be the basis of Ionic philosophy.

As is often the case in Voegelin's thought, the "engendering" scientific or theoretical work that helped set in motion his own reflective movement is left behind to make room for an independent play with the ideas set forth in the "engendering" study. In this case, the results were particularly fruitful, because the problem of mysticism had become one of the last areas Voegelin considered of utmost importance for his theory of equivalences. Thus, Zaehner's relatively simple distinction became fraught with possibilities. It could be used to get a better conceptual grip on the vexing questions of Indian and Chinese mysticism that had eluded exegesis using the vocabulary of philosophy "simply because it is exegesis of theistic mysticism." In other words, the vocabulary of a Thomas Aquinas or a Nicholas of Cusa was not applicable to these and other instances of monistic mysticism. This insight enabled Voegelin to formulate with greater precision how he understood the difference between Eastern thought and Western philosophy:

> Between cosmic primary experience and its articulation through myth on the one hand and noetic and revelatory experiences on the other lies, as an independent type, the differentiated experience of the consubstantiality of all being, which finds its own expressions, such as Brahman or Tao, in order to articulate the experience on its own level. In its interpretation of self as a result of this experience, reasoning can be just as logical as in philosophy; and the results are interpretative arrangements of being that in this form, to a large extent, touch on philosophy without becoming it."[42]

The identification of a third type of experience in Indian and Chinese mystical thought is of interest to us in the context of the subject of this paper, since it affects of course the question of the "leap in being" and the "incomplete breakthroughs" in Indian and Chinese

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[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid., 488.

civilization. Voegelin saw a possible key to the phenomenon of these experiences in the Parmenidean distinction between *nous* and *logos*. I let him speak for himself:

> *Nous* designates the experience of the transcendental divine being; *logos* is the instrument of articulation. *Logos* also exists elsewhere, but is not used to apply to *nous* but rather precisely to Brahman and Tao. The resulting symbolism results in the famous "wisdom of the East," which is closer to philosophy than to myth, without being the same - a type of wisdom whose resonance in the West of our time again throws some light on the monistic experiences in the West, which then speak to the Eastern experiences.[43]

The idea of the logos as the "instrument for discursive articulation" is nothing new, as the discussion of Parmenides in *The World of the Polis* shows;[44] what is new is that this distinction turns out to be valuable in characterizing "Eastern mysticism" as more than a philosophy manqué. Voegelin's overall goal, as he indicated in a brief remark to Henningsen in 1969, was to be able to clarify the "mythical foundation of the areas of the human soul and of the cosmos." In the same breath he promised a "parallel third piece on mysticism."[45] The letter contains an enclosure, the paper on the "Moving Soul, the piece in which Voegelin had attempted to demonstrate that "there is no 'physical universe' independent of the perspectival primary experience of the cosmos."[46] The other piece referred to in the letter as the clarification of the foundation the area of the human soul in myth was the Equivalences paper. What the third piece on the foundation of mysticism in myth would have looked like, we are only able to reconstruct in a piecemeal fashion. It is not unreasonable, though, to assume that part of Voegelin's research on the Paleolithic and Neolithic symbols was to play an important part in the search for the mythical foundation of mysticism.

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[43] Ibid.

[44] See especially the brief discussion "From Parmenides to Protagoras" in the chapter on the Sophists, *CW* 15, 366 f.

[45] The context of this reference can be found in the "Editors' Introduction" to *CW* 28, xxiv ff.

[46] Eric Voegelin, "The Moving Soul," in *CW* 28, 172.

If the purpose of this part of the paper has been to show that the foundation of Voegelin's understanding of consciousness is to be found in the myth, that is, in the primary experience of the cosmos, the "primordial field of reality," and that the mystical dimension of the primary experience is inseparable from its nature, it remains to be shown how the historical dimension enters this field, signified in the "leap in being." Given the foundation of consciousness in myth, could it be that even the historical dimension has a mythical foundation? This will be the purpose of the third and concluding section of my paper.

3. The Leap in Being

In the introduction to this paper, I posed the question whether the "leap in being" represented a kind of ontological fissure, which Voegelin had noticed in the spiritual breakthroughs of the Axial Age and which resisted any "explanation" in the manner of a gradualistic transition of one form of consciousness to another. Early indications were that such was not the case and that instead something had taken place over a relatively short time span of a few hundred years that resulted in a kind of breaking of the cosmic vessel and a revelatory experience of the trans-cosmic ground of being, an experience that occurred in the human psyche, transforming the psyche into the tensional consciousness of man vis à vis the God of Israel in one case, the divine beyond in another, the experiences of a trans-cosmic reality of the Buddha, and the "theio-physic" speculations (the term was coined by Voegelin and his Munich assistants) of Confucius and Lao-tse. These breakings of the cosmic vessel Voegelin would later refer to as the "Epiphany of Man" in his lectures on the "Drama of Humanity." But if the detailed discussion of the primary experience and its mystical dimension was meant to do anything, it was to show that the modern term "consciousness" cannot replace the depth dimension of experience, symbolized in the term "psyche," and that the breakings of the cosmic vessel, as radical as the may appear in the experiences of the trans-cosmic Beyond, may in the final analysis not have succeeded in breaking up the "primordial field." Therefore, the symbolization of this radical break as a "leap in being" may in fact be the only way to indicate that what has been experienced is

something that has not fundamentally altered the primordial field but has entered it, only to be experienced as something with a very tentative foothold in the primordial field, from which it can withdraw as suddenly as it appeared. The attentive follower of my description will have noticed that this is indeed the experience of the people of Israel and its prophets, the experience of Plato's philosopher, the experience of a Buddha and the Chinese "sages," and last, but not least the great Christian and Islamic mystics.

I have already made brief reference to Voegelin's acknowledgment in the *Autobiographical Reflections* that he took the term "leap in being" from Kierkegaard. As with all of such statements, it is imperative that we also look at this one within the context in which it was made. What were the theoretical problems in which Voegelin spoke about the leap in being?

> Moreover, the further one traces back the conventional origin of ideas, the more it becomes clear that such symbolisms as myth and revelation can by no stretch of the imagination be classified as "ideas." One must acknowledge a plurality of symbolisms. A Hesiodian theogony, for instance, is simply not a philosophy in the Aristotelian sense, even though the structure of reality expressed by myth and philosophy is the same – a sameness of structure already recognized by Aristotle. Problems were arising that I tried to express through such concepts as "compact," or "primary experience of the cosmos," and the differentiations that led to the truth of existence in the Hellenic Classic, the Israelite, and the early Christian sense. In order to characterize the decisive transition from compact to differentiated truth in the history of consciousness, I used, at the time, the term *leap in being*, taking the term *leap* from Kierkegaard's *Sprung*.[47]

Voegelin here identifies the theoretical problem as the "plurality of symbolisms" which express the same structure of reality but in quite different ways, on different "levels of consciousness," one might say. Paying attention to Voegelin's language, we notice that he speaks of "the decisive transition from compact to differentiated truth," a transition in fact so "decisive" that it can only be symbolized with the term that Kierkegaard employed whenever he wanted to characterize a qualitative change that occurs suddenly and unexpectedly.

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[47] *CW* 34, p. 104 f.

Kierkegaard mentions the original example of such a leap in the *Concept of Anxiety*, - a work with which Voegelin was familiar already in his early years - when he discusses the concept of First Sin in Genesis. The discussion is in fact quite interesting on it own merits, because Kierkegaard begins by taking issue with the idea that was already being floated in the first half of the nineteenth century, the idea that "the Genesis story of the first sin…has been regarded somewhat carelessly as a myth."[48] And, as Kierkegaard notes: "When the understanding takes to the mythical, the outcome is seldom more than idle prattle." But Kierkegaard does not fall into the trap in which someone like Bultmann found himself a century later, the trap of "demythologizing." Instead, he takes the myth seriously:

> The Genesis story presents the only dialectically consistent view. Its whole content is really concentrated in one statement: *Sin came into the world by a sin.* Were this not so, sin would have come into the world as something accidental, which one would do well not to explain. The difficulty for the understanding is precisely the triumph of the explanation and its profound consequence, namely that sin comes into the world in such a way that by the fact that it is, it is presupposed. Thus sin comes into the world as the sudden, i. e., by a leap; but this leap also posits the quality, and since the quality is posited, the leap in that very moment is turned into the quality and is presupposed by the quality and the quality by the leap. To the understanding, this is an offense; *ergo* it is a myth. As a compensation, the understanding invents its own myth, which denies the leap and explains the circle as a straight line, and now everything proceeds quite naturally.

For those who associate Kierkegaard with the so-called "leap of faith," a term he actually never used, it may come as a surprise that he conceives of the "leap" as an ontological change, or more accurately, as a sudden "irruption," as Voegelin would call it, into reality, a moment of timelessness that changes the very nature of temporality. Voegelin's familiarity with Kierkegaard, and especially the *Concept of Anxiety*, is documented in his discussion of the idea of

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[48] This and the following passages are taken from Søren Kierkegaard, *The Concept of Anxiety. A Simple Psychologically Orienting Deliberation on the Dogmatic Issue of Hereditary Sin*, ed. and transl. Reidar Thomte (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1980), 31 f.

anxiety in his fragmentary "Theory of Law" ("Rechtslehre").[49] However, I would like to add a word of caution. Voegelin was not the kind of thinker who would adopt another thinker's argument wholesale, just because he found an imaginative formulation of a problem that addresses some aspect arising in his own reflective effort. With the same justification one could argue that Voegelin may have taken the "leap" from Karl Jaspers, who uses it extensively and with similar meanings in his early work *Psychologie der Weltanschauungen*. Voegelin always thought very highly of this particular work of Jaspers, and his copy is marked with copious underlinings, including passages in which the word "leap" occurs. In short, the notion of a "leap in being" probably came to Voegelin in the course of a meditative process in which he was actually searching for as precise a term as possible to describe what was taking place in the consciousness of a relatively few human individuals when they became aware – either through a direct revelatory call or at the end of a meditative process – that the source of cosmic order was not located within the cosmos itself but "beyond" the cosmos, even though it was experienced by a human being within the cosmos, who had thus become privileged and elevated as a human being and had thus ceased to be just like the other cosmic "things" with which he shared his habitat. Indeed, this was a "differentiation" of reality, occurring in the psyche and thus making the psyche aware, that is, conscious of its own status in the structure of reality. Voegelin wanted to indicate unmistakably that this event was not simply a matter of "cognition," that it was not merely *Erkenntnistheorie* but an ontic event. The concept of the "leap in being" suggested itself as the best possible linguistic solution to this problem.

The numerous passages in volumes I and II of *Order and History* in which Voegelin makes reference to the leap in being seem to corroborate this brief interpretation of meaning and use of the term. But the few remarks Voegelin made about the meaning of the term in response to direct questions also support such a reading. When he was asked for instance, whether the leap in being could be understood as referring to a society or only to individuals, he gave an unequivocal reply: "It is always done by individuals and spreads

[49] Cf. *CW* 32, 404–406.

from there. We do not know of any collective leaps in being but only of experiences represented in concrete personalities. In the person of Confucius, as attested by his work, such a leap has taken place. Or in the life of the unknown author of the *Tao Te Ching* as attested by that text. Or in Plato's dialogues we can see it. But it's always a matter of individuals as far as we know."[50] It is precisely this aspect of the experience of transcendence represented by the leap in being, its occurrence only in "concrete personalities" that makes it "inseparable from the understanding of man as human" and ultimately leads to its Platonic and Christian differentiation that says that a "personal soul as the sensorium of transcendence must develop parallel with the understanding of a transcendent God."[51] Nothing illustrates this highly personal aspect of the leap in being more beautifully than Voegelin's discussion of Abram's changing his berith-master from Baal to Yahweh. In making his berith with Abram Yahweh changes the nature of the compact from one of bondage to one of freedom. But unlike Yahweh's berith with Moses, this first berith remains confined to Abram's soul, and yet it is already pregnant with the future that makes this event one to be told by the descendants of Abram as the paradigmatic story of Yahweh's future compacts with his people in history. What this paradigmatic aspect of the Abram story consists in is eloquently described in the following passage of *Israel and Revelation*:

> 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. In the case of Abram's experience this "future" is not yet understood as the eternity under whose judgment man exists in his present. To be sure, Yahweh's berith is already the flash of eternity into time; but the true nature of the "future" as transcendence is still veiled by the sensuous analogues of a glorious future in historical times. Abram receives the promise of numerous descendants and their political success in the dominion of Canaan. In this sense the experience of Abram is "futuristic."[52]

The "flash of eternity into time" gives history its soteriological "future," a future that is a promise for the living and the descendants

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[50] Voegelin, In Search of the Ground, in *CW* 11, 243.

[51] *CW* 14, 281.

[52] Ibid., 239 f.

and ushers in an eschatological dimension that would eventually bring about a growing concern with the "mystery of death and immortality," something that was not immediately given to Abram, Moses and the prophets of Israel but that emerged in Greek philosophy from Pythagoras to Heraclitus and Plato and found its ultimate formulation in the Paulinic formula of the resurrection.

It was in Israel where the leap in being became the founding moment that called into existence the Chosen People under God, an existence far more precarious than that of any single person's, if only because it comprises the dimension of history and the increased possibility of a rejection of the original experience under the stress of temporal events, thus also heightening the possibility of God's withdrawal from history, an "eclipse of God," to use Martin Buber's phrase, and the flight into Messianic hope and apocalyptic expectation. Voegelin emphasized this possibility repeatedly in *Israel and Revelation*, beginning with what he calls Isaiah's "metastatic faith." As he points out already in the introduction to the volume, "a change in being actually has occurred, with consequences for the order of existence. Nevertheless, the leap upward in being is not a leap out of existence. The emphatic partnership with God does not abolish partnership in the community of being at large, which includes being in mundane existence."[53] As Voegelin notes in his account of the principal phenomena associated with the leap in being, it does not establish "an ultimate order of mankind" and there may be repetitions of the leap in being that will "correct the initial insight and supplement it with new discoveries."[54] Thus Voegelin makes the strongest possible case against any apocalyptic misunderstanding involving the leaps in being, for "mankind has not come to the end of its history, but has become conscious of the open horizon of its future." But even more importantly, the order of the societies in which leaps in being have occurred, while being affected by these events, responds with its own "indigenous history of repetitions on the new level of existence," which is an unequivocal rejection of any assumption that the leaps in being abolish the histories of the societies in which they occur, thus

[53] *CW* 14, 49.

[54] *CW* 15, 69.

culminating in the kind of one history of mankind that was the brainchild of the Enlightenment and its even less enlightened successors. We must of course not confuse this development with the idea of universal humanity, which did issue from the original leap in being in Israel. But it is within the context of universal humanity that Voegelin conducted his theoretical analyses for the *Ecumenic Age*, looking for a parallel to this idea in the Chinese Ecumene. Even though everything suggested to him that the leap in being had not been as radical and complete as in Israel and Hellas, he was certain that the Chinese search for order of the Axial Age is in fact characterized by the occurrence of leaps in being that distinguish it from other civilizations of that time period. Why should China be singled out as having had such a leap in being, albeit different and less complete, Voegelin asks in the Chapter on the Chinese Ecumene. His answer may appear surprising, given his insistence that the differentiation of reality has so far reached its culmination in the West.

> The reason is that no other civilization is distinguished by such a galaxy of original, forceful personalities, engaging in spiritual and intellectual adventures that *might* have culminated in a radical break with cosmological order but invariably got bogged down and had to succumb to the prevailing form. In its pre-imperial phase, China is characterized by the immense pressure of an early established order on all movements of the soul that occur within it; in its imperial phase, by the incredible strength of the Confucian style of orthodoxy, which overcomes *all* rivals in the end."[55]

This is perhaps more of a philosophical homage to the Chinese search for spiritual and political order than we get from those cultural historians who made Chinese thought their specialty. For Voegelin, China has "the marks of a classic culture of the Hellenic type" and he credits it with having developed an ecumenicism of its own, something that he had put to the test by his doctoral students, Peter Weber-Schäfer and Peter Opitz at the Munich institute. The eventual dissociation of the Chinese "compact cosmological order into power and spirit," the appearance of power politicians and their legalists advisors on the one hand, and the two types of Confucian and Taoist sages turned out to be irreversible, even reaching into the

[55] *CW* 17, 354 f.

present, and it is overwhelming proof "that Chinese society had moved toward an anthropological conception of order through a leap in being, even though it was not radical enough to break the cosmological order completely."[56]

In moving to the conclusion of this paper, I have highlighted the question of the Chinese leap in being because a) Voegelin's formula of the "incomplete breakthrough" in China remains a vexing problem, especially to all those of us who have love and admiration for classical Chinese culture, and b) the very idea of an "incomplete breakthrough" strikes many readers of Voegelin's work as an unnecessarily severe judgment, when it is by no means clear that the complete breakthroughs have not had rather disastrous consequences in the West, as Voegelin's own critique of modernity attests to. Yet my reason for focusing on this controversial topic is anything but sinister. On the contrary, Voegelin's treatment of the Chinese ecumene in volume IV of *Order and History* is meant to make the point I have been trying to make throughout this paper: The leap in being is the symbol for a mystical kind of event that recurred in the past of humanity in different places and at different times, though clustered around the so-called Axial Age, a kind of event that manifests itself as a theophany in one case, as the end point of a noetic process in another, as the epiphany of man in all cases, and always as an event in which something happens that is interpreted by those to whom it happens as a break in the continuity of cosmic time, something that will be remembered as entering time, being timeless itself. The memory constituted by this kind of event may itself then constitute a new experience of time, an experience that takes the form of the "flow of presence," as Voegelin called it since the 1960s and that is the substance of what we have to call "history," if we want to be precise in the sense in which T. S. Eliot was when he wrote in *Little Gidding*: "for history is a pattern of timeless moments." The reason why the term "leap in being" is the most appropriate one to denote the entire spectrum of this kind of event has to do with the fact that the concrete human beings who consciously experienced this irruption of the timeless into time lived under very different cultural and social conditions, so that their responses to the experience varied

[56] Ibid., 369 f.

from that of a Moses who became the leader of a people to a Plato who decidedly did not want to become the leader of a polis or an even larger political unity, to a Confucius who wanted to teach those who were already leaders of a people, to name just three of the most prominent recipients of the experience.

That these events of ontic intersections may lead to "breakthroughs" in the understanding of the reality in which their recipients live has less to do with the nature of the "irruption" than with the continuation of the primordial field of reality that comprehends everything. It is perhaps a relic of the progressivist thinking of the Enlightenment that we sometimes assume that an "incomplete breakthrough" is to be seen as a deficiency. But mystical events have nothing to do with "progress" except that of the pilgrim who finds "fulfillment through grace in death." The leap in being is not a leap forward or backward but a leap *in being*, that is, a disturbance of the primordial field by something that is experienced as other than any of the things that make up the field. Once this experience has entered consciousness nothing is as it was before; history begins.

In arguing that the "leap on being" is a mystical symbol I have paid attention to the ambiguity of the term. It is not a concept, for it lacks the concept's definitional clarity. As a language symbol it is almost devoid of content, it hints at the *analogia entis*, while not even mentioning that concept anywhere in its vicinity. In reflecting on the leap in being, I am reminded of Voegelin's characterization of mysticism in a letter to Gregor Sebba, written in February of 1973. Sebba had responded to the manuscript of "Reason: The Classic Experience" and had asked Voegelin the direct question whether he considered himself a mystic. Here is Voegelin's answer:

> Regarding "Mysticism" I have given no more than the brief reference, in order to suggest this further field of differentiation. In a strictly technical sense, the term "mystica" appears for the first time in the *theologia mystica* of pseudo-Dionysios (ca. 500). The problem, of course, is older. In Origen, there is still a very conscious combination of dogmatic theology with a mystic theology; and mysticism is a strong ingredient in Plotinus. In such contexts, "mysticism" means the awareness that the symbols concerning the gods, and the relations of gods and man, whether Myth or Revelation, are secondary or derivative to the primary experiences of divine presence as that of a reality beyond any world-contents and beyond

> adequate symbolization by an analogical language that must take its meanings from the world content. In that sense, Thomas is a mystic, for he knows that behind the God of dogmatic theology there is the tetragrammatic abyss that lies even beyond the *analogia entis*. But in that sense also Plato is a mystic, for he knows that behind the gods of the Myth, and even behind the Demiurge of his philosophy, there is the real God about whom he can say nothing. It may horrify you: But when somebody says that I am a mystic, I am afraid, I cannot deny it. My enterprise of what you call "de-reification" would not be possible, unless I were a mystic. Otherwise, the "de-reification" would be no more than enlightened psychologizing.[57]

It was the defining characteristic of Voegelin's philosophical search for the order of reality that he knew when to reify and when to "de-reify." The Leap in Being represents a conscious choice on Voegelin's part to preserve this distinction and thus the mystery of being.

[57] Letter dated February 3, 1973, in *CW* 30, 751 f.

THOMAS A. HOLLWECK

A DISTURBANCE IN BEING: THE IDEA OF REVOLUTION IN HISTORY*

I

Among the regular lecture courses Eric Voegelin gave during his tenure at the University of Munich, there was always a course on revolution. Voegelin used to introduce the topic by pointing out that one of the major topics of political science, political institutions, are essentially forms of human conduct that remain relatively stable over a certain length of time. Yet a philosophical science of order and disorder cannot be limited merely to the phenomena of order – and that is what political institutions generally are -, but must pay at least equal attention to the "class of phenomena in motion and change," *i.e.*, to the "infinitely differentiated field of social and historical processes, the field of the foundation, maturation, and decline, of the reform and revolution, and of the collapse of institutions."[58] If one wants to examine, therefore, the phenomenon of revolution, one should approach it as a manifestation of the tension between order and disorder, perfection and imperfection, duration and change in history, always being mindful of the fact that it is the experience of this tension that lies at the basis of all human societies and that is intimately connected with the process of what Voegelin has called "the articulation of society," "the process in which human beings form themselves into a society for action."[59]

It was only in the late eighteenth century, in the American and French Revolutions, that the idea of a completely new order of

* The final draft received is dated September 28, 2010.

[58] This formulation appeared in Voegelin's 1964 essay "Der Mensch in Gesellschaft und Geschichte" ("Man in Society and History"), at approximately the same time as the lectures on revolution. Cf. *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, vol. 11, *Published Essays 1953-1965* (Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000), 194.

[59] Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics*, *CW* 5, 117.

society became associated with the idea of revolution as expressed in the motto that appears on the reverse side of the Great Seal of the United States: "*Novus ordo seclorum.*" It was only in the wake of these modern revolutions that Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy could formulate his definition of the "genuine revolution," as he did in his book *Die europäischen Revolutionen* of 1931 where he writes: "When we speak about revolution in this book we refer to only the kind that has sought to introduce once and for all a new principle of life into world history, in short a total turning-about ("eine Totalumwälzung"). According to this conception, revolts and coup d'états are to be excluded, even if they are called 'revolution'."[60] The German word *Totalumwälzung* here is a more or less literal translation of the word "revolution," and even though this restriction of the term to its Enlightenment and post-Enlightenment meaning excludes a variety of phenomena of political regime change, which would fit a political scientist's understanding of revolution, Rosenstock-Huessy correctly identifies the specifically "modern" understanding of change, one that distinguishes between gradual adaptation and alteration of institutions, called "reform," and a fundamental transformation of man and society, both externally and internally, that dominated the imagination of political movements in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the West and would eventually spread throughout the world in the latter part of the twentieth century. Thus, in the common contemporary conscious-ness, the idea of what Rosenstock-Huessy called a *Totalumwälzung* has become the perspective from which we interpret not just the recent past but history as far back as the beginning of the appropriately labeled "Neolithic Revolution" that took place between 10,000 and 5,000 B.C.E. In the light of the millennial transformation brought about by the Neolithic Revolution the great political revolutions of modernity are of course mere seconds on the clock of history that appear as incomplete, inconclusive events, or more or less haphazard outbursts

[60] "Wenn wir aber in diesem Buche von Revolution reden, so meinen wir nur eine solche, die ein für allemal ein neues Lebensprinzip in die Weltgeschichte hat einführen wollen, also eine Totalumwälzung. Danach scheiden Revolten und Putsche aus, auch wenn sie Revolution heißen." Eugen Rosenstock, *Die europäischen Revolutionen. Volkscharaktere und Staatenbildung* (Jena: Eugen Diederichs Verlag, 1931), 5. [My transl.]

of human willfulness. "We assume that revolutions happen because they are planned," writes Rosenstock-Huessy in the revised American edition of the earlier book, before stating authoritatively: "But this supposition is without foundation in reality. Announced revolutions do not happen."[61] It may well be that behind this observation we will find an essential characteristic of revolution, which is at the same time its fundamental mystery: the unpredictable course of all great revolutions, their apparent irrationality, and the elusiveness of their ultimate *telos*, which usually runs counter to all the stated goals of those who initially set out to "make revolution." I will, therefore, attempt to show in this paper that Rosenstock-Huessy's observation may point us in a new direction of understanding revolution, by openly linking it to the spiritual dimension of human participation in the process of reality as the experienced tension between order and disorder. His vision of a planetary fusion of the great spiritual religions, after the series of "total revolutions" of the second millennium had reached their climax in the two World Wars, and the Russian Revolution stands as testimony to the spiritual power embedded in even the most violent outbursts in history.

Even a skeptic like the Oxford political philosopher and author John Gray affirms this spiritual aspect of revolution in his recent critique of the apocalyptic political religions that have added additional misery to our lives on all continents over the past century when he writes in *Black Mass*: "The Enlightenment ideologies of the past centuries were largely spilt theology. The history of the past century is not a tale of secular advance, as *bien-pensants* of Right and Left like to think. The Bolshevik and Nazi seizures of power were faith-based upheavals just as much as the Ayatollah Khomeini's theocratic insurrection in Iran. The very idea of revolution as a transforming event in history is owed to religion. Modern revolutionary movements are a continuation of religion by other means."[62] John Gray's succinct, if sweeping formulation of the connection between revolution and religion leads straight into the issue to be discussed in this

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[61] Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Out of Revolution. Autobiography of Western Man* (Norwich, VT: Argo Books, 1969), 128.

[62] John Gray, *Black Mass. Apocalyptic Religion and the Death of Utopia* (New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 2007), 2.

essay. I will try to state the issue as concisely as possible: Revolutions originate in the mystical visions of individual human beings who experience the tension between order and disorder more intensely than their contemporaries with whom they share this tension in their concrete societies. Historically, such intense experiences of the tension between order and disorder occurred for the first time in those societies that are commonly referred to as "Axial Civilizations." These experiences led to, to use S. N. Eisenstadt's characterization, "conceptions of a chasm between the transcendental and the mundane…[that] gave rise to attempts to reconstruct the mundane-human personality and the socio-political and economic order according to the appropriate transcendental vision, to the principles of the higher ontological order formulated in religious, metaphysical and/or ethical terms, or in other words to implement some aspect of such vision in the mundane world."[63] I am letting Eisenstadt state the issue here, not because I think he states it better than Eric Voegelin has done in *Order and History* and related works, but because Eisenstadt formulates the problem specifically in the context of revolution. Eisenstadt's "Axial hypothesis" of the origins of revolution is based on the premise that in the civilizations to which we refer as "Axial" "[t]he political order as one of the central loci of the mundane order was usually conceived as lower than the transcendental visions and had to be reconstituted according to the precepts of the latter" and that therefore fundamental changes in the political realm are ushered in by certain "transcendental visions" so that what we call "revolution" is inseparable from the tension between the political and the transcendent. In his discussion of fundamentalism, sectarianism and revolution, Eisenstadt goes as far as calling "heterodox sectarian movements…a central component of the crystallization of modernity in Europe, above all in the Great Revolutions."[64] Viewed in this light, revolutions constitute the essence of modernity because they are the culmination points of the "heterodox potentials" that were

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[63] S.N. Eisenstadt, *The Great Revolutions and the Civilizations of Modernity* (Leiden-Boston: Brill, 2006), 45.

[64] S.N. Eisenstadt, *Fundamentalism, Sectarianism, and Revolution. The Jacobin Dimension of Modernity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 3.

engendered by the cultures of the Axial Age, especially those cultures "in which the political arena was seen as the ultimate area for the realization of transcendental visions of salvation."[65]

While the sociologist's conceptual language of the "heterodox potential" correctly addresses the issue that increasingly complex societies enable the rise of heterodox or antinomian groups, Eisenstadt's central thesis implies that the origin of revolution lies in the possibility of alternative conceptions of order comprising the entire spectrum of reality, which originate with segments of society that are able to distance themselves from the institutional structures of the social order in which they have previously participated. Such alternative conceptions of order did not arise everywhere where the external conditions were favorable, as the example of Egypt shows, and they did not arise all at precisely the same time, one reason why we are rather generous in the dating of the Axial Age, but we can clearly discern a growing momentum toward a "distinction between ultimate and derivative reality (or between transcendental and mundane dimensions, to use a more controversial formulation)," as one of Eisenstadt's authorities, Johan Arnason, has formulated it.[66] What is important about Eisenstadt's analysis in the present context is its clear understanding that what he calls the Great Revolutions are not mere regime changes but are tied to "distinct cosmological visions" and thus become "kernels of distinct civilizations." If the defining element of these new revolutionary processes is "the emergence and institutionalization of the new basic ontological conceptions of a chasm between the transcendental and mundane orders," the question must be asked who the individuals and groups are that are able to discern such a chasm in the order of reality, living, as they are, in cosmological societies (Voegelin) ordered in analogy with the visible order of the divine. Eisenstadt proposes the idea that they were "small groups of autonomous, relatively unattached 'intellectuals' (a new social element at the time)" and that they were able to cause their visions of order to become "the predominant orientations of both the ruling elites as well as of many secondary elites."[67] The

[65] Eisenstadt, *The Great Revolutions*, 5.

[66] Ibid., 44.

[67] Eisenstadt, *Fundamentalism, Sectarianism, and Revolution*, 4.

discovery of the "chasm" entails of course the idea that there is an inherent "ontological" hierarchy of order, that there are "higher" and "lower" levels of reality, and the "mundane" order becomes the symbol for those areas of reality in which most of that which we may call "the political" takes place, with all its imperfections resulting from the human *libido dominandi* that is just as strong in cosmological societies as it is in the more differentiated societies of the post-Axial Age. Ultimately, the discovery of the chasm will lead to the call for a "reconstruction" of the incomplete order, Eisenstadt concludes, leaving open the question whether such a call would issue from the groups of "intellectuals" or from any of the elites that have adopted the new conceptions of order. Yet the origins of the "salvational" movements of reconstruction, to follow Eisenstadt's use of the Weberian term, remain unexplained as long as we content ourselves with a sociological description of these processes as social phenomena, instead of hermeneutically examining their meaning as symbolizations of fundamental experiences of the order of reality.

II

For a more complete understanding of the genuinely "revolutionary" changes that occurred during the "Axial Age" and have come full circle in what we call "modernity" we must go beyond the theoretical accomplishments of Eisenstadt and the neo-Weberians and focus instead on the meaning of these changes as it was understood by those whose experiences of reality engendered the very symbolizations that are being discussed here. What is needed is the theoretical approach formulated by Eric Voegelin in his "Configurations of History" and it will be helpful present to the concept of "configuration" in Voegelin's own words:

> Configuration refers to more than the patterns that are observable in history, such as the sequences of institutions. In various high civilizations we know that we begin with certain types of political organization, usually of a monarchical or an aristocratic type, and that democratic types always come later in the course of a civilization. Such sequences would be patterns that can be empirically observed. But this is not all, because conceptions of order in a civilization are always accom-

> panied by the self-interpretation of that order as meaningful; that is, the persons living in an order have opinions about the particular meaning that order has. In this sense, self-interpretation is always part of the reality which we live. This is the reality of order, of political order, or as we might say, of history. A configuration considers all of these aspects, not only the institutional aspects, but also the self-interpretations – the opinions expressed concerning meaning.[68]

Concretely speaking, Voegelin's response to the processes described by Eisenstadt became the story of *Order and History* which primarily relied on the written testimony of those who were both instigators and witnesses of revolutionary changes in which the chasm between the order of society and the invisible divine source of order was gradually articulated to its fullness. The Axial Age, Voegelin persuasively argued, was in reality the "Ecumenic Age," a time period in global history during which local "cosmological" societies were violently absorbed into large empires whose leaders intended them to become the organizational forms of known humanity. At the same time, the symbolic orders of the prevalent cosmological societies, as well as the new ecumenic orders were subjected to fundamental critique, not by "autonomous, unattached intellectuals" but by spiritual men who, within the cultural context of their respective societies, understood the new insights into the order of reality they received as representative not only of their local culture and society but of humanity as a whole. These spiritual men may appear in the role of a leader of a small tribe subjected to the rule of an Egyptian Pharaoh, as prophets in times of political upheaval, or as Athenian philosophers, as Indian princes, or Chinese sages, they all saw themselves, and were seen by others, as representatives of new universal orders that challenged everything that came before. Thus, they more or less unwittingly became elements of disorder in their respective societies, because theirs are insights into the "true order, which is different from the established order. Thus, every new insight into order is the beginning of a revolution of more or less considerable dimensions."[69] For Voegelin, the configurations that constitute

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[68] Eric Voegelin, Configurations of History, *CW* 12, 97.

[69] Ibid., 112.

history are the expression of man's awareness that he participates in events which are part of his existence and are memorable as, to use Voegelin's phrase, "disturbances in being." It is no accident that he used this phrase repeatedly in his unpublished introductory chapter "What is History?" intended for *The Ecumenic Age*, his response to the theoretical flaws that in his opinion characterized the notion of the "Axial Age." Thus, the "elements of disorder" in society are at the same time ontological events, according to Voegelin, "disturbances in being" that manifest themselves both in the differentiations of the mythical cosmos into a "world" and a "world-transcendent God" and in the power drives of individuals like Alexander and Caesar culminating in the desire to establish Ecumenic empires.[70]

If we now look at Eisenstadt's revolution thesis in the light of Voegelin's analysis, an analysis that has yet to be fully understood in all its consequences, we are able to restate it without, I believe, falsifying its intended meaning: During the time period between 800 B.C.E. and 600 C.E., let's call it an "adjusted" Axial Age, the cosmological cultures of Southern Europe, the Near East, India and China gave rise to spiritual movements that had their source in the experiences of men who articulated a profound sense of dissatisfaction with the traditional means of mediating the spiritual order underlying the structure of their respective societies and who em-

[70] Voegelin's actual formulation of the problem in "What is History?" deserves to be quoted in full here: "In this primary sphere [where a present is constituted as a past to be remembered in the future] originate the experiences that may pass through various phases of reflective clarification before they culminate in an act of historiography. Obviously, this description of the phenomenon is couched in the same language as the earlier description of an experience of transcendence. At the beginning again there is something that only can be called a *disturbance in being* (My emphasis) preceding all reflective dissociation; again there follow phases of reflection in which, from an indistinct matrix of involvement, man is released into his search of the meaning that was enclosed in the encounter - in this case, into his search of what is truly memorable about the disturbance - until the movement culminates in an act in which man faces events as the history that occurs to him. This parallelism of formulation, which will appear presently, is not an accident; rather, it indicates the structure of transcendence in history." Eric Voegelin, What is History?, *CW* 28, 10.

barked on their own searches for a more fundamental, absolute source of order than the one that had been mediated by the traditional elites. At the core of these searches we find what Benjamin I. Schwartz has aptly called "a pathos of negation and constraint vis-à-vis the forces of human pride and passion."[71] As stated earlier, the carriers of these visions became founders of new elites of prophets, ascetics, philosophers, and scholars in competition with the cosmological elites. It is important to understand that the processes being discussed here occur in what Voegelin appropriately calls the "primary experience of the cosmos." Political society is symbolized as a complex network of cosmic analogies, "ordered by the same forces of being that order the cosmos, and cosmic analogies,"[72] analogies that are based on the notion that "the world, in the physical sense, and with it the gods, kings, and societies are conceived as consubstantial partners in a cosmos that embraces them all without being identical with any one of them."[73] This order must be preserved and periodically renewed through symbolic rituals in order to counteract the effects of time and the inevitable aging and decay wrought by time, symbolic actions that Mircea Eliade called "statisation du devenir" and in which a return to the pristine order of the cosmogonic origins is reenacted in regular periodic intervals, such as New Year Festivals and similar symbolic rituals. The notion that "total revolutions" are sometimes needed to ensure a return to a pristine cosmogonic beginning, that a complete and radical renovation is at times the only cure for what is perceived as advanced social and political decay, thus appears to be the logical response to the ever present problem of disorder, a response that appears to have perennial validity, long after the cosmological societies have been replaced by the ecumenic empires and the later political formations that reach right into our modern age.

For a theory of revolution an understanding of the constant presence of the primary experience of the cosmos is of the greatest im-

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[71] Benjamin I. Schwartz, The Age of Transcendence, in: *Daedalus* 104:2 (Spring 1975), 5.

[72] *CW* 14, 78.

[73] *CW* 17, 122.

portance, precisely because the breakthroughs of the Axial Age occurred within the symbolic context of this primary experience in which the tension between order and disorder has remained alive as an antidote to the great visions of overcoming this tension that marked the spiritual religions born during the Axial Age. While Voegelin himself never developed a systematic theory of revolution, he provided us with enough material evidence to improve on Eisenstadt's model. The central point of Voegelin's analysis of the cosmological style of truth is to be found in his observation that there are historical forces that pose existential threats to the cosmological order strong enough to ultimately destroy faith in this order and lead to the search for a ground of order beyond the potentially endangered cosmos itself. Let me stress, though, that there is no direct causal relationship between the anxiety and bewilderment that will follow disruptive pragmatic events. The discovery of a rift in the analogical structure of the cosmos may just result in alienation and despair, whereas basic changes in the cosmological style of truth "can come only through noetic advances that let more compact symbols appear inadequate in the light of more differentiated experiences of reality and their symbolization."[74] It is not too far-fetched, in my opinion, to argue that the key point of Voegelin's philosophy of order is at the same time a philosophy of revolution, for Voegelin does not content himself with the observation that the discovery of the chasm between the mundane and transmundane order takes place during roughly the time period of the Axial Age, but shows instead that the discovery of a transcendent ground of reality is, as it were, preformed in the primary experience itself, specifically, the experience of "the tension of existence out of nonexistence." What is particularly important to Voegelin's analysis in the context of revolution is his argument that the cosmological style of truth is "fundamentally unstable" because it is not able to adequately deal with the tension between existence and non-existence. In short, Voegelin argues, "the pressure of the tension in reality…tends to disrupt the ordered whole of intracosmic things" and eventually the cosmic reality is perceived as "too much existent to function as the non-existent ground of reality."[75]

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[74] Cf. *CW* 17, 121.

[75] Ibid., 127.

This may sound far too abstract to the reader who is used to regard changes in the religious and philosophical interpretation of reality as a kind of intellectual pastime that is practiced by elites of one kind or another, instead of seriously entertaining the possibility that spiritual breakthroughs signify not only a change within phenomenal reality but have an ontological dimension that not only changes man's perception of reality but reality itself. Voegelin coined the term "leap in being" to denote this aspect of a qualitative change in reality as a whole. A theory of revolution has to be based on an understanding that the initial insights leading to what Voegelin calls the "crack" in the cosmological style originate in the consciousness of concrete human beings who in turn may share them with others, thus forming the kind of groups that have been referred to as the "new elites." But what concrete form the articulations of the new insights will take, whether they will motivate their spiritual and intellectual carriers to remain deliberately apolitical or take the opposite path of actively engaging in the societies of which they are part and thus precipitate social changes, or, as in the case of the ancient apocalyptic movements, prepare the ground for expectations of divine intercession in reality, this is precisely the stuff "history" is made of. Yet the cosmic primary experience will continue in the sphere of popular religiosity, even after it has ceased to be the motivating force in the further development of the new elites. It is from this rift that the rich history of the great civilizations issues, bringing forth the new types of movements and leaders who again and again sought to translate their visions into the global expansion of empires during the Ecumenic Age, or into the founding of apocalyptic and Gnostic communities, and ultimately the call for the kind of fundamental renovation that formed the revolutionary ferment in European civilization from the late Middle Ages into the twentieth century.

I have obviously painted with a broad brush here, but it was important to show that what happened during the Axial Age was precisely what Voegelin in his essay on the discovery of historiography called "disturbances in being," where the human participation in the events that constitute reality is clearly seen for the first time. But does Voegelin's ontological language provide us with the right hermeneutic tools to understand what is really happening in the Axial Age or the "Age of Transcendence," as Benjamin Schwartz called it

in his keynote address to the 1973 Daedalus conference? When Schwartz spoke of "some common underlying impulse in all these 'axial' movements, it might be called the strain towards transcendence,"[76] was he talking about the same "disturbance in being" "caused by the rise and expansion of empire" (Voegelin)? In short, we must further pursue the question what changed in the intellectual and spiritual make-up of Axial Age human beings and their societies, and ultimately entire civilizations if we want to penetrate to the ontological roots of such phenomena as the rise of historiography and the discovery of history forming the basis for the idea of a total revolution of not just society but the human beings themselves that constitute society. For the fact that a change did indeed take place is something cultural sociologists, cultural historians like Eisenstadt and Schwartz and political philosophers like Voegelin agree on.

Let us recapitulate what we have seen so far: The empirical evidence that there did in fact occur fundamental intellectual and spiritual breakthroughs during the Axial Age is no longer questioned today. What continues to be a matter of debate is the interpretation of the phenomena associated with these breakthroughs. But the phenomena which support a hermeneutics of transcendence and which are introduced as "proof" of the "spiritual" nature of historic movements of social and political transformation, i.e., the Great Revolutions, must also not be used indiscriminately to help shore up modern political theologies of revolution, as we find them for instance in Ernst Bloch's *Prinzip Hoffnung* (*The Principle of Hope*) and his early book on the leader of the peasant revolt in sixteenth century Germany *Thomas Münzer als Theologe der Revolution* (1921). However, there is an important set of questions connected with the breakthroughs of the Axial Age that have not been dealt with systematically by cultural sociologists and historians, but which in my opinion are absolutely central to a fuller understanding of the relationship between spiritual breakthroughs and revolution. They can, as I see it, only be approached from the vantage point of a hermeneutics that is "determined by the interplay between the cognitive exploration of the phenomena of the experiential world as revealed in the multiple

[76] Schwartz, The Age of Transcendence, 3.

modes of human self-explication and the reflexive analysis of human existence," as Jürgen Gebhardt has characterized the central achievement of Eric Voegelin's *geistes-wissenschaftliche* hermeneutics.[77] While the cognitive aspects of the relationship between Axial Age and Revolution have been clearly discerned by scholars like Eisenstadt and Schwartz and the post-Weberian sociological orientation they represent, the existential dimension of their findings belongs within the domain of a compre-hensive philosophy of order in which meditative self-reflection enables the scholar to see the connection between public symbolic manifestations of the transcendental breakthroughs and their existential location in the consciousness of the persons to whom these experiences occur. As Gebhardt formulates it in the aforementioned paper: "The meditative experience is constitutive for human experience insofar it illuminates the cognitive and existential center of human personality from which meaningful web of socio-political and symbolic forms radiate into the human realm." It is with this hermeneutics in mind that I began to see that Voegelin's notion of "disturbances in being," which he applied to his interpretation of the connection between the huge historical disturbances caused by the appearance of "Ecumenic empires" in a world formerly constituted by cosmological empires and tribal societies and the emergence of historiography in China, Hellas, and Israel needs to be more broadly understood as the Birth of History, even if the experience of history is at first restricted to the small society of Israel from which it radiated over more than half a millennium into the fabric of the societies that succeeded the Roman Empire in the West.

The heuristic advantage of Voegelin's theoretical concept of the "Ecumenic Age" over the modified "Axial Age," which Eisenstadt and others employ in their search for the origins of revolution, is that it points to the libidinous aspect in the experience of transcendence that may lead to the eventual destruction of the cosmological empires by opening the door to a potentially radical dissociation of power and "spirit" that was unimaginable in tribal and cosmological societies. What the concept of the "Ecumenic Age" enables Voegelin

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[77] Cf. Jürgen Gebhardt, Hermeneutics and Political Theory (Paper presented at the APSA Annual Meeting, 2002).

to see and what eludes the representatives of cultural sociology is succinctly formulated in "What is History" within the context of a discussion of the disintegration of the primary cosmological experience in Hellas and the conflict between sophists and philosophers. The breakdown of the old order, he remarks there, does not necessarily lead to a more desirable order but could have some rather unforeseen effects. "The experience of transcendence, to be sure, exacts a new interpretation of being, but it is by no means certain what form this interpretation will assume once the primary experience of the cosmos has been discredited. It may assume the philosophic form, which interprets the totality of being compactly comprehended in the primary experience, but it may also assume various defective forms according to the willful preferences of the interpreters for this and that segment of reality."[78] Voegelin's eye for the potential dangers of the experiences of transcendence informs his entire political philosophy with its theoretical center in the permanent conflict between order and disorder. Once man *consciously* becomes "the interpreter of being," as Voegelin calls it, he is empowered to see himself "as the source, if not of order, then at least the conception of order," and this newly gained autonomy "can be used in the service of truth as well as untruth." Here comes the decisive statement: "Hence, in the new state of emancipation, there are as many conceptions of order possible as there are drives and desires in the psyche apt to harden into centers for organizing them."[79] The fact that in this post-cosmological consciousness the question of right order is always in danger of becoming a matter of opinion will have the consequence that "[h]ighly specialized desires, when made the organizational center, will cause severe disturbances in the economy of the psyche; moreover, they will cause a man and his followers to be maladjusted to the exigencies of existence in the world. Cases in point are certain apocalyptic and Gnostic sects that indulge their desire for redemptions from the evils of this world to the point of expecting the end of the world to be near, and accord-

[78] Voegelin, *CW* 28, 30.

[79] Ibid.

ingly neglect to provide for the permanent order of man in society."[80]

Taken by themselves these "disturbances in the economy of the psyche" do not yet have the decisive revolutionary ingredient that may ultimately lead to the desire to affect a fundamental change in the structure of man and society that we associate with the modern idea of revolution. Nor does Voegelin mention "revolution" in his essay even once. Instead, he focuses on the *experiences of transcendence*, because these experiences form the basis of the configurations of history. This requires a brief explanation because it is central to Voegelin's "philosophy of history," to use this term with all due caution. While Voegelin's account of spiritual outbursts is widely known, the link between individual outbursts and the social field in which they occur and which in turn is constituted by such outbursts has not received the same attention, mainly because Voegelin was always reluctant to argue for any direct causal relationship. He does, however, explore the issue in "What is History?" where he observes that the "movement in a man's soul, passing through phases of confusion and of seeking preliminary to the act of transcendence" has parallels in a movement in society that passes through similar phases, until ultimately "[m]ankind as a whole tends to become the subject of the movement that breaks forth in the spiritual outbursts."[81] Yet Voegelin makes it also quite clear that the expansion of the movement in the soul of a concrete human being into "social processes in which an indefinite number of persons and even whole societies participated" should be understood "metaphorically" rather than as observable phenomena. **"**Such metaphors, by which the experience is made to include the process of which it is a part, are useful to bring the difficulties to attention, but they obviously are no theoretical solution."[82] The reason for Voegelin's terminological restraint lies precisely in the transcendent nature of the spiritual outburst, for as phenomena occurring in space and time these movements have a "double constitution" and are thus

[80] Ibid., 30 f.

[81] Cf. *CW* 28, 33 f.

[82] Ibid., 34.

objectified historical phenomena, *i.e.*, immanent objects or, as Voegelin calls them, "a secondary stratum in the phenomenon that as a whole is the expressive response to an encounter. The primary stratum, since it is the carrier of the index transcendence, shall be called the *transcendent stratum*."[83] Voegelin calls this "transcendent stratum" the "primary stratum" because it is indicative of "the realization of eternal being in time" occurring "in a manifold of phenomena through the whole breadth of mankind at any given time," a manifold the "moves through time indefinitely into the future." Thus Voegelin arrives at his definition of history: "This process of phenomena in breadth and time we shall call *history*."[84] To enter into the complex philosophical questions associated with this understanding of history requires a separate analysis. I have to confine myself here to the consequences Voegelin's view of history has for a theory of revolution. His theory takes its point of departure from the ineluctable fact that the experience of transcendence signifies an ontic event."[85] It is for this reason, and this reason alone, that occurrences that constitute history – and revolutions in the initially stated sense of "total revolutions" are among such occurrences – are themselves ontic events, disturbances in being that manifest themselves on the phenomenal level. To say it in Voegelin's own words:

> In general, one may say that an indefinite range of events belonging to the economic, social governmental, intellectual, and spiritual order of society can acquire historical relevance because closely or distantly – as causes or effects, as social settings, as conditions or consequences – they are related to the central phenomenon, that is, to the experience of transcendence.[86]

It is in the concluding reflections of "What is History?" that Voegelin explicitly warns against treating the "spiritual outbursts" as mere phenomena in time when they are to be understood philosophically as "part of the movement by which eternal being realizes itself in time," giving with one hand what he takes away with the other when he tells his reader that symbolic phrases such as "eternal-being-

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[83] *CW* 28, 35.

[84] Ibid.

[85] *CW* 28, 49.

[86] Ibid., 36.

realizing-itself-in-time" are understood as a "unit of meaning" and not as a quasi- scientific description of an observable process in time. To quote his precise warning which takes on the form of a kind of "negative theology":

> There is no reality called "being" that once would exist in the medium of eternity and, after its realization, in the medium of time; nor is there an "eternal being" that suddenly would appear as an object in time; nor is there a "temporal being" that would be transfigured by the realization and acquire the attribute of eternity; nor are there media of time and eternity with objects flitting from the one to the other. To advance these negative propositions is eminently necessary, considering that in the wake of spiritual outbursts there arise movements of world-historic impact that operate precisely with fallacies of the adumbrated type. Not only will the terms of the ontic event, as well as the tension between the terms, be objectified even the objects will be personified to become the *dramatis personae* of a new type of myth. Moreover, the fallacious constructions are more than a matter of theoretical error; they are undertaken for the purpose of transposing the disturbance in being into the sphere of human action.[87]

In my estimate, Voegelin's hermeneutics of consciousness and its resulting analysis of movement in history is a clear advance over the existing theoretical models of Eisenstadt and the neo-Weberian cultural sociology when it comes to explaining the sources of revolution in post-Axial history. For Voegelin the objectification of the symbols of transcendence is an act of willful transformation "for the purpose of transposing the disturbance in being into the sphere of human action." As the spiritual outbursts, which are ontic events, become objects of human manipulation as they give rise to social movements, they give at the same time rise to a new type of myth in which the symbols turned objects become the *dramatis personae*. Such acts of willful transformation – and this is of the greatest importance to our understanding of modern revolutions – can be directed toward a perfect state of eternity, *i.e.*, "classic" apocalyptic and Gnostic myths, or "conversely, a perfect being beyond time can be made to enter time", *i.e.*, modern revolution.[88] To sum it up: "The imaginary

[87] Ibid., 50.

[88] Ibid., 51.

operation thus can perfect being either by freeing temporal being from its worldly prison or by bringing eternal perfection to temporal being within the world."[89] I will return to the consequences of this transformation of ontic events into social action in the next section of this essay.

III

In European history the later Middle Ages became the social battleground where the "imaginary operation" played out and where its dual possibilities were never quite resolved. Revolution during the Axial Age had remained one of several possible directions which the experience of transcendence could take, rather than an actual social manifestation of this kind of experience because the disturbances in being were still largely experienced as cosmic disturbances and the human role in this cosmic drama could only be played as the prophetic anticipation of divine irruption into "pragmatic history" in the apocalyptic movements, as the attentive waiting for the call of the alien God which would liberate the soul from the demiurgic prison, or as the noetic love of wisdom that would establish a harmonious order of the soul and society, and last but not least as the soul's *exodus* in the Augustinian *amor dei*. The possibility that there might be a more active, more radical role the soul could play in the cosmic drama by transforming the messianic apocalypse of the Kingdom of God into the "apocalypse of the soul," to use von Balthasar's term, required one additional step that separates the activist *pneumatics* from their apocalyptic and Gnostic brothers and sisters in the spirit. This step, closely related to the Gnostic idea of the soul as the divine spark that needs to be liberated from its bodily prison, is taken when the Gnostic myth of the "fall in the divinity" loses its explanatory appeal and when the soul no longer sees itself as trapped in the demiurgic prison, but when the accent is shifted to the divine substance in man and its identity with the divine creative ground. Soon this experience of a more than virtual identity becomes so strong that it will have consequences not just for the person who experiences it but also for the society of which this "divine" person is a part. What

[89] Ibid.

is at issue is inherent in the initial differentiation of the cosmic primary experience into the "indices" "world" and "God" and with it the question of how the divine remains present in the world that is no longer the divine cosmos. In the language of mystical philosophy: How does the divine incarnate itself after it has become "transcendent"? And what does this mean for the representation of transcendent truth in human sphere of political society? Voegelin, in what can only be called a masterpiece of theological thinking, has provided us with a fascinating reading of the question of the Unknown God and the Incarnation. At the end of the German version of "The Gospel and Culture" which he presented as a lecture in Munich in October 1970,[90] Voegelin, perhaps motivated by the political tensions in post-1968 Germany, summed up the potential problems that could arise in the wake of the differentiation of the "Unknown God" from the cosmic gods that began in Israel and that became a problem for Plato in the *Phaedrus*, and even more so in Christianity. Since God has become extra-cosmic but is still experienced as connected to the cosmos as the creator of the world in Judaism and Christianity, He is "eminently present in man in the incarnation." But, not unexpectedly, this eminent presence of God in man can lead to all sorts of derailments, so that man's existence by virtue of his relationship to the extra-cosmic God can itself become an extra-cosmic existence, while still being anchored in the physical world. In other words, the classic Gnostic myth of the divine *pneuma* in man that is imprisoned in the demiurgic cosmos and has to be awakened by the call of the Alien God to be reunited with the transmundane *pneuma* no longer satisfies the activist desire to liberate the worldly prison rather than escape from it. This merger of the radical a-cosmism or anti-cosmism of "classic" Gnosis with the ever-present yearning for incarnation has tremendous significance for our understanding of revolution: man in his imagined extra-cosmic existence now experiences the urge to reshape the cosmos through metastatic action so that the cosmos conforms to man's imagined extra-cosmic

[90] The Eric-Voegelin-Archiv at the Geschwister-Scholl-Institut für Politikwissenschaft, University of Munich issued the lecture as part of 2 CD set "Immer gleich weit entfernt von Gott." There exists no printed version of this lecture, which condenses the American original, *CW* 12, 172-212, but places greater emphasis on the aspect of magic violence.

existence. The world has to be recreated to reflect the extra-cosmic perfection of the man-god for whom the truth of the divine presence of the gospel has now become the counter-truth of his own extra-cosmic existence. As Voegelin emphasizes, while the Christian symbolism of the Unknown God is not inherently Gnostic, Christianity in the gospels "creates the cultural field in which Gnosis as an extra-cosmic counter-posture becomes possible," accompanying Western civilization in a variety of activist and quietist forms. Here Voegelin at last gave the experiential explanation for his original Gnosticism thesis of the *New Science of Politics* when he argued that man's experience of his relation to the extra-cosmic Unknown God manifests itself as an "extra-cosmic isolation of existential consciousness" and becomes the cause of metastatic actions designed to transform the cosmos in such a way that it conforms to the imagined extra-cosmic existence of man. We could say that ultimately the cosmos becomes a kind of magic laboratory in which man performs his magic acts of violently changing reality. In his later reflections on revolutionary violence Voegelin realized its structural similarities to the alchemistic strand in Western thought since the Renaissance and he kept emphasizing that the magic character of revolutionary violence had not been sufficiently noted in contemporary discussions of violence.[91] But a discussion of these questions goes beyond the scope of this paper. For now it must suffice to remember that what Voegelin called "the extra-cosmic contraction of existence" manifests itself as one of the "disturbances in the economy of the psyche" on the phenomenal level, while ontologically it must be classified a one of the "disturbances in being." Its millennial history culminated within the cultural field of the Christian gospel, but it required the gradual erosion of the cosmic primary experience, still very much present in early Christianity, to unfold its full revolutionary potential. What late modernity has come to know as the "death of God" is not the death of the Unknown God behind the cosmic gods but the death

[91] One among several explicit references to this problem may be found in a 1971 letter in which Voegelin expresses his admiration for Hannah Arendt's *On Violence* while at the same time lamenting the fact that "she disregards the all-important point that violence has become an instrument of magic, meant to achieve the alchemistic opus of the perfect society." Letter to Arian Mack, dated January 23, 1971, *CW* 30, 693.

of the God of the Incarnation, or to state it more provocatively: The death of the Son of God. It is Voegelin – and he is by no means alone with this observation – who notes that "[t]he death of God and the death of Man are correlative phenomena."[92] The disturbance in the economy of the psyche is the expression of man's fundamental alienation from God and consequently from himself. Logically, only two ways out of this *cul-de-sac* remain for man: either a Platonic *metanoia* or a total and radical revolution.

The history of the Gnostic revolutionary movements that begins in the late Middle Ages provides ample evidence for the validity of this thesis. As Norman Cohn has shown in *The Pursuit of the Millennium*, the beginnings of a wave of sectarian revolutionary movements go back to at least the early twelfth century and figures such as Tanchelm and his followers in the province of Utrecht and the Amaurians in early thirteenth century France. About the Amaurians' beliefs Norman Cohn writes: "When the Amaurians claimed that 'each one of them was Christ and Holy Spirit', they meant all that Tanchelm had meant. They were convinced that what Christian theology regards as the unique miracle of the Incarnation was now being repeated in each one of them. Indeed they believed that the Incarnation as it had taken place in Christ was now being surpassed."[93] Cohn echoes Voegelin's account of the Free Spirit movement in the chapter "The People of God" of the *History of Political Ideas* when he sees in this movement the roots of modern nihilistic revolutions, characterizing its spiritual dynamic with these words:

> They were in fact Gnostics intent upon their own individual salvation; but the gnosis at which they arrived was a quasi-mystical anarchism – an affirmation of freedom so reckless and unqualified that it amounted to a total denial of restraint and limitation. Those people could be regarded as remote precursors of Bakunin and of Nietzsche – or rather of the bohemian intelligentsia which during the last half-century has been living from ideas once expressed by Bakunin and Nietzsche in their wilder moments. But extreme individualists of that kind can easily turn into social revolutionaries –

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[92] Voegelin, The Eclipse of Reality, *CW* 28, 138.

[93] Norman Cohn, *The Pursuit of the Millennium* (New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961), 159.

> and effective ones at that – if a potentially revolutionary situation arises.[94]

Voegelin's studies of the sectarian mystical activists emerging in the late Middle Ages led him to very similar conclusions as those of Cohn's. Yet Voegelin was able to take his analysis of revolutionary movements inspired by the extra-cosmic contraction of existence a step further, because he understood, long before he found the theoretical language he developed in "The Gospel and Culture" or "The Eclipse of Reality," that the nature of these new movements and their spiritual leaders was itself a spiritual matter and needed to be discussed on that level. Consequently, Voegelin developed the concept of the "activist mystic" who is unable to live with the *visio beatifica* as the symbol of a perfection that can only be reached through grace in death and who "mistakes the symbol for an experience that can be realized existentially in the life of man and society."[95] Voegelin's analyses of the sectarian activist are well enough known to anyone who has some familiarity with his work that we do not have to lay out his argument here in detail. But what is relevant to this discussion of total revolution in the post-Ecumenic age is the astuteness of Voegelin's insight into the role this activist mysticism has played not only in Western history but also, by extension, on a global scale. Here his analysis shows wide-ranging agreement with Rosenstock-Huessy's theory that world wars "are a marriage between war and revolution"[96] The "universal exclusiveness" of the sectarian mystic's vision of replacing the old world with a new one leads to universal alliances against him that result in world wars, not because of the global expansion of the military theater, but because "the mysticism of sectarian exclusiveness endows the parties with the will to universal destruction."[97] Simply put, total revolutions and world wars are two manifestations of the same underlying problem, the eclipse of reality brought about by the extra-cosmic contraction of existence. The activist mystic's goal of

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[94] Cohn, *Pursuit of the Millennium*, 150.

[95] Voegelin, *CW* 22, 167.

[96] Eugen Rosenstock-Huessy, *Die Hochzeit des Kriegs und der Revolution* (Würzburg: Patmos Verlag, 1920).

[97] *CW* 22, 172.

transposing his transfigured world into reality through political action, first through revolution at home and, following that, through ecumenic expansion of the revolution furthermore requires a new understanding of the role of violence in this process. Voegelin recognized this already in the 1940s and found a new technical term for it when he introduced the term "eschatological violence" to denote "a realm of action that lies, in the sentiments of the activist believers, beyond good and evil, because it secures the transition from a world of iniquity to a world of light."[98] It will not come as a surprise that the carriers of such eschatological violence, due to their suspension beyond good and evil, are likely to indulge in actions marked by a level of atrocity that deliberately bursts open any existing limits of institutional political violence. What also makes it difficult for the representatives of the "old world" to understand the nature of eschatological violence and to defend their social order against it is not only their frequently displayed inability to understand the activist mystic's radical extra-cosmic position but has just as much to do with the inherent planlessness of radical revolutionary action. As I mentioned at the beginning of this essay, Rosenstock-Huessy had observed that revolutions are not planned. And this goes probably for all revolutions. But, as Voegelin notes, there is a deeper aspect to this absence of a plan, and that has to do with the intended goal of the revolution, the annihilation of every vestige of the old world and the establishment of an order that is based on the assumption that human nature will have changed. The clash between the existing order based on human nature and the visions of the new order leads to the well-known phenomena of revolutionary chaos and the almost inevitable rise of revolutionary figures who understand that they have to act "on precisely the principles on which he would have had to act if the revolution had not occurred."[99] In its final stages this process results in the liquidation of the "incurable eschatologists" and the establishment of dictatorial regimes.

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[98] Ibid., 174.

[99] Ibid., 126.

It is not always easy, therefore, to see the phenomena we have mentioned here in the cool ontological light of "disturbances in being." One is far more tempted to look at them as phenomena of mass insanity or *Massenwahn*, to use the terminology Hermann Broch introduced in his studies on mass psychology and politics in the twentieth century.[100] While such an interpretation is by no means wrong and in fact yields important insights into the nature of these movements, as Broch's and Elias Canetti's analyses have shown, it not sufficient by itself to adequately describe their nature. Voegelin was aware of this when he stated the issue in "What is History?" under the impression of the events of the 1960s, both East and West: "Since liberation is the order of the day, and the Gnostic mass movements play their great role in the politics of our time, one cannot be careful enough in the analysis of the ontic event, not rigorous enough in determining the meaning of terms."[101] As political philosophers look at apparent parallels between phenomena such as modern "liberation movements," violent sectarian movements such as National Socialism, Marxist social revolutions such as the Russian and the Chinese Revolution on the one hand and their Christian antecedents between the 14th and 16th century on the other, they must beware of making oversimplifying comparisons. Only a philosophy of consciousness that differentiates between these movements as phenomena and as participatory events in the comprehensive reality of being enables us to gain a measure of understanding of their significance. Otherwise political philosophers will not be able to successfully counter Hannah Arendt's argument made almost half a century ago in her book *On Revolution*, which questioned whether it was permissible to interpret modern revo-lutions as secularized versions of the rebellious social fervor of the early Christian sects enhanced by a new sense of the eschatological nature of history originating with Joachim of Fiore and finally the Reformation and the radical social eschatology of men like Thomas Müntzer. In *On Revolution* Arendt reacted to the secularization debate that was just

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[100] Cf. Hermann Broch, *Massenwahntheorie. Beiträge zu einer Psychologie der Politik*, vol. 12 of *Kommentierte Werkausgabe*, ed. Paul Michael Lützeler (Frankfurt a. M., 1979).

[101] Ibid.

beginning to reach its dramatic climax in the wake of Karl Löwith's *Meaning in History*, Blumenberg's *Legitimität der Neuzeit*, and the revival of Carl Schmitt's *Politische Theologie* in Germany. There is no need to address these issues here, except to say that Voegelin was always aware of the fact that his Gnosticism theory did not cover all the theoretical problems of modern revolutionary existence and that the often uncritical application of the theory to all forms of revolutionary violence could easily derail into a secondary ideology that would obfuscate rather than illuminate the issues. For instance, one aspect of Voegelin's theory as presented in *The New Science of Politics* that is consistently neglected is the notion that with the dissociation of spirit and power, which occurs during the Ecumenic Age and reaches its climax at the end of antiquity and the victory of Christianity in Europe, the "de-divinization of the temporal sphere of power" had been completed. The Gelasian differentiation of the two estates, the temporal and the spiritual, proved to be a precarious solution, being constantly threatened by the very real gains that were made on the temporal side. Thus, it is ultimately the persistent re-divinization of society that characterizes the development of modern Western societies and the revolutionary movements associated with this development. Even "secularized" societies and political movements have to be endowed with meaning from within and, as we have seen, this meaning often was provided from within the inner-Christian tension that shaped so much of Western history and ultimately spilled over into non-Western societies through such ideological political religions as Marxism.

That the re-divinization of society is indeed more than a Western process and that it is intimately connected with the revolutionary aspect of modernity is shown in Robert Jay Lifton's analysis of the Chinese Cultural Revolution in his *Revolutionary Immortality*, a study conceived during the height of the Cultural Revolution between 1966 and 1968. In it, Lifton examined the events in China under the aspect of the search for immortality by revolutionaries who experience "a shared sense of participating in permanent revolutionary fermentation, and of transcending individual death by

'living on' indefinitely within this continuing revolution."[102] This idea that found its theoretical articulation in Trotsky's principle of "permanent revolution" reflects the great fear of all true revolutionaries, the death of the revolution, which needs to be counteracted with a "total mobilization of faith," something that Lifton defines as "*psychism* – the attempt to achieve control over one's environment through internal or psychological manipulations, through behavior determined by intra-psychic needs no longer in touch with the actualities of the world one seeks to influence."[103] It will have become clear after what we have said about the extra-cosmic contraction of existence earlier that Lifton's psychological terminology is aimed at the same phenomena as those described by Voegelin in "The People of God" and the "Eclipse of Reality," *i. e.*, the attitude of the extra-cosmic revolutionary whose hatred for existing reality is so strong that he does not even believe that he has to adjust his pragmatic actions to the traditional means-ends relation. The Chinese Cultural Revolution is still awaiting its theoretical analysis that may show that eschatological violence can also occur outside the Christian cultural field.

The question we have to come back to at the end of this essay emerges from the preceding reflections as the question of the connection between the disturbances in being and the human psyche, not in the psychological sense of the word, but in the philosophical sense of consciousness. This is the reason why I have attempted here to shift the accent from revolutions as social and political movements to the experience of the potential and the actual revolutionary and the tension between perfection and imperfection that some experience more strongly than others. What Voegelin called "disturbances in being" are not some ontological ripples but the very concrete conflicts that play out in the concrete souls of concrete human beings. This tension is always at the center of Voegelin's political philosophy and it could therefore be argued that it is a philosophy *sub specie revolutionis*. Nothing sums this up better than a sponta-neous answer Voegelin once gave to a questioner who expressed concern that

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[102] Robert Jay Lifton, *Revolutionary Immortality. Mao Tse-Tung and the Chinese Cultural Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 7.

[103] Ibid., 32.

Voegelin dismissed "the apocalyptic element," a dis-missal that would lead to a "static civilization." "Civilizations are never static," Voegelin replied, "because every man is an element of revolution in the world."[104] Far from making Voegelin a crypto-revolutionary, the remark underscores the fluidity of social and po-litical institutions reflecting the tension between order and disorder in history. It cannot be repeated often enough that we must distinguish between this ever-present revolutionary substance and the revolutions originating in a profound alienation from reality. In Voegelin's words: "…giving revolution the foundation of an existen-tial theory – that man in his alienation is the ultimate entity – *that* is new."[105] Revolution as an existential theory, that is indeed the signature of modern revolution, and Voegelin's analysis of the "complex structure of existence" that follows man's loss of identity after the death of God may well provide the most promising opening to a more profound understanding of the link between revolution and consciousness to date. A passage in a letter of Voegelin's to one of his former Munich assistants which h paraphrases the analysis given in "The Eclipse of Reality" may illustrate this best:

> I believe I have succeeded at last in presenting the problems of disturbed existence with some theoretical polish…The main problem was to find the formulae for the split consciousness: the true self (existential identity), the false self (contracted self) that is imagined, and the consciousness that must make space for both (comprehensive consciousness). The true self has a genuine identity, the false self has an imagined identity, and comprehensive con-sciousness has no identity altogether and is, therefore, in constant danger of falling apart (nihilism, if consciousness holds together at all; schizophrenic neurosis, when it does not hold together any longer). Comprehensive consciousness, which has no identity, is the subject of violent revolutionary activism.[106]

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[104] Voegelin, In Search of the Ground, *CW* 11, 249.

[105] "Conversations with Voegelin", *CW* 33, 283.

[106] Letter to Peter Leuschner, dated December 20, 1967, in: *Selected Correspondence. 1950 – 1984*, ed. Thomas A. Hollweck, *CW* 30 (Columbia, MO: University of Missouri Press, 2007), 555. See also Voegelin, The Eclipse of Reality, *CW* 28, 138. Eric Voegelin, Realitätsfinsternis, with a Foreword by Peter J. Opitz; trsl. into German by Dora Fischer-Barnicol (Berlin: Matthes und Seitz, 2010).

We have come full circle from the revolutionary symbolisms of the Ecumenic Age beginning with the Exodus and taking on the forms of prophecy in Israel, the conflict between sophists and philosophers in Hellas, the libidinous conquest of the ecumene, the preparation for the apocalyptic end of history and lastly the radical break with the cosmos in the extra-cosmic existence of the Gnostics and their spiritual descendants. There is a common element of violence in all of these "disturbances" to which Voegelin frequently refers as "irruptions" from the transcendent side and "eruptions" as the manifestations of the human responses to the transcendent irruption. Moreover, these disturbances disrupt the balance in the carefully balanced cosmological orders with which they break, and con-sequently result in an uncontrolled release of elements of the human libido, the passions, with the major political consequence of the dissociation between spirit and power, which has become the millennial signature of the post-Axial Age. The *novus ordo seclorum* on the Great Seal of the United States has become a symbol that has lost much of its one-time revolutionary appeal. What has remained for the time being are the contracted selfs of would-be revolutionaries with or without suicide vests. The notion of the Eclipse of Reality as the current state of revolutions and its carriers seems to be the only fitting way to describe the state of revolution today.

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