OCCASIONAL PAPERS

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Eric Voegelin

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Materialien zu Eric Voegelins
„History of Political Ideas" (III)

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INHALT

ERIC VOEGELIN:

THE PEOPLE OF GOD

a.   The Problem
          aa. The two Planes of Western Civilization.
Under this title we have to survey a field of phenomena which
are fairly well known singly through monographic studies, but
are rarely presented either in their historical connection or
their systematic structure as a whole. Since the beginning of
the 11th century, the spiritual and intellectual history of
Western Civilization is being acted on two different planes.
On the upper plane which we have considered up to now
exclusively, we find the evolution of the feudal system, the
centralization of the incipient national monarchies, the feudal
Church and the centralized Church, the ideas of the Empire, of
the *Corpus Mysticum*, of the relations between the spiritual
and temporal power; and we shall find, beginning with the 16th
century, the ideas of the national state, of the Reformation, of
relations between Church and State, of the People and its
representation, of natural law, individual rights and
constitutional government. Under this surface unfolds the
millennial drama of the sentiments and ideas which are in
revolt against the institutional superstructure of our
civilization. When we discussed the Hellenic a-politism, we
had occasion to observe that the tension between the
institution of the polis and the sentiments* of the a-political
groups would recur in the Christian civilization in a more
radical form because the Christian idea of the person in its
immediacy to God would prove the permanent irritant against
the institutions; the idea of the Christian person would have
the double function of an agent of revolt against the
institutionalization of the relations between the soul and God,
and of an agent of regeneration of the institutions.

bb. The Category of Reformation. The interactions between the lower and the upper stratum of sentiments and institutions differ in principle from the relations between Hellenic a-politism and polis life. The surge of a-politism in Hellas, if successful, had to result in the disintegration of the polis because the politico-religious polytheism of the polis-world could react against the essentially monotheistic mysticism of the soul only with collapse. The fully developed Christian civilization, on the other hand, can absorb the outbreak of radical mystic movements and can draw new forces from them through repeated minor reformations. The category of *reformation* becomes thus an idea distinguishing medieval and modern Western Civilization from the Hellenic. The five centuries from 1000 to 1500 are characterized by the digestion of radical movements through a series of minor reformations and by the social, sometimes bloody suppression of the indigestible dregs of such movements. With the 16th century begins a new phase, characterized by an increasing incapability of the traditional institutions of digesting the radical movements. This is the period of the Reformation written large which results in the split of the sacramental unit of the one Catholic Church. If we take this functional view of the absorptive capacity of traditional institutions, and are aware that we have to explain the change, we have found the essential approach to the understanding of the body of political ideas which may be called modern in a technical sense as against medieval. The new factor which has destroyed the digestive ability of the Sacred Empire is the growth of new mystical bodies, of the nations. The Reformation seems to be, therefore, primarily not a religious phenomenon, concerning the Church only, but the symptom of the political process which split the politico-religious unit of the *Imperium* into new politico-religious units, giving rise to such varied phenomena as the church-state and the state-church, the unworldly sectarian voluntary church and the secular state. Our civilization, however, has not ceased to be Christian because

the Empire broke down; the tension between the established institutions and the radical personality from the buttom continues and has assumed in out time dimensions which foreshadow not only further heavy blows against the Churches, but also against the mystical bodies of the nations, with unpredictable results.

cc. Difficulties of Approach. An adequate account of this undercurrent of ideas is beset with difficulties which arise out of the nature of the phenomenon. First of all, the undercurrent has the characteristics of the movement in the strict sense of mystical movements in the souls of single individuals and of their followers. They do no crystallize easily into the form of rational, logified systems of ideas, but express themselves in symbols which can be understood fully only if interpreted in terms of the movement of the soul itself. It is doubtful in a strict sense at all. They are clearly related with one another in their general structure over centuries, and we are faced by the methodological question whether their sequence in similar forms is due to historical continuity between them, or whether they spring up every time anew without being determined by preceding similar phenomena; this question is, as we shall see, open and in need of clarification. A second difficulty is our insufficient direct knowledge, particularly of the movements before 1500. They are movements of revolt; the physical destruction of the adherents and their literature leaves us over vast stretches with reports of the adversaries as the only sources. The reports, however, are not without value; medieval inquisitors did not deal gently with sectarians, but they understood them excellently. As a matter of fact, they understood them much better than certain liberal scholars of the 19th century and after who extended their tolerant misunderstanding to the world at large and to politico-religious movements in particular. The liberal benevolent treatment of the movements is the third obstacle in our way. – And, finally, we encounter the difficulty that our intellectual apparatus is developed in the world of

ideas of the established institutions and does not offer adequate categories for the designation of the movement phenomena.

dd. The Range of the Undercurrent Movement – Edward Gibbon. It is the great merit of Edward Gibbon to have drawn attention for the first time in ch.54 of his "Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire" to the range of the movement. He drew a line of direct historical continuity from the Paulician movement of the 7th century in Syria, over the transformation into the Bogomil sect, through the migrations of Paulicians and Bogomils to Upper Italy, to the appearance of the Cathars in Southern France in the 11th century. The line from the Cathar movement goes through the Waldenses and the Franciscans to the later sectarian movements spreading over all Europe, with their high marks in the Lollards in England and the Hussites in Bohemia in the 14th and 15th centuries. The Reformation proper, then, is accompanied by the Peasant War and the Anabaptist movement spreading from Holland to Switzerland and from the Alsace to Moravia, with its continuation in the sect life of Holland, England and America. The movement resurges in the Puritan Revolution with its fringe of Diggers, Seekers and Ranters; and from then on changes into the socialistic undercurrent movements of our modern nation states. The mere enumeration of only a few of the movements ranging from Byzantine sects over medieval spiritual movements to the communist trends of our own time shows that it will no be easy to formulate the common denominator. And, indeed, this group of movements is one of the darkest corners in the history of political ideas; all we can say about it will have to be fragmentary and tentative in spite of important contributions to the question in recent times.

b. Institution and Movement

aa. The Institutionalization of Church and Empire. We begin perhaps best with the tension which arises out of the institutionalization of the Church. The two main features

which we mean by institutionalization are (1) the compromise of the Church with the world, and (2) the evolution of the sacramental organization. In both respects we have only to summarize the problems set forth in earlier section. The Church has become the great civilizing factor of the Western world because she was able to compromise the strict teaching of Jesus, which emanates from the Sermon on the Mount, with the needs and the frailty of human nature.[1] The great steps in the compromise were, first, the acknowledgement of the secular political power as willed by God and its integration into the charismatic order of the Mystical Body; and, second, the acknowledgment that every member of the Mystical Body has to accept his status in accordance with his natural gifts and shall obtain salvation not through the heroic effort of imitating the apostolic life, but through the objective sacramental Grace as mediated by the Church. The development of the sacerdotal office and the mediation of divine Grace through the Seven Sacraments, enveloping the human being from birth to death, is, therefore, the second great step without which the first, of accepting the natural order of society, would be ineffective. The Church as a divine-human organism is the social body of the God-Man; and the sacramental Christ operates anew the union of God and Man every time the priest celebrates the sacrament. The celebration of the sacrament is the social-temporal dimension of the Incarnation of the Logos in the Flesh. Through the sacramental mediation of Grace the human individual with all its weaknesses is integrated into the Mystical Body. The decisive practical function in this system has the Sacrament of Penance through which the direction of the individual conscience becomes possible, while the ethical

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[1] For the following see Ernst Troeltsch, *The Social Teaching of the Christian Churches*, Translated by Olive Eyon, New York 1951 (German originial published 1911), vol. I. On the civilization compromise see pp. 201ff., 212ff., 218ff., 235.

problems of the individual with their unsolvable conflicts are taken on the shoulders of the Church.[2]

bb. The Church as the Basis of Western Civilization. The very achievement of this magnificent merger of spiritual and temporal power in the unit of the *Sacrum Imperium* produces the reaction which threatens to undermine it. Through the compromise the Church is enabled to accept the whole social structure of a people with its occupations and habits and social differentiations as a whole and to instill into the social body the spiritual and ethical values with such gradations as are bearable for the average human being. No jump is required which would bring about the Kingdom of God within the generation of the living; the tension of eschatological expectation is relaxed into the atmosphere of a civilizing process which in slow and patient work extends over centuries. The compromise Church can operate on the masses and utilize the wealth of natural gifts, slowly ennobling them by giving them the direction toward supernatural aims. The vicarious sacrifice of Christ can be extended into a social principle according to which the extraordinary asceticism of individuals who are gifted for a saintly life assumes the function of a vicarious offering which accrues to the salvation of the less gifted brethren in the community through the clearing of the sacramental Church. The vast organism finds a rank for the rich and the poor, the priest and the layman, the prince and the subject, the educated and the uneducated, the heroic ascet and the weak sinner, the warrior, the tradesman and the peasant. And in this sense the Church has become the basis of Western Civilization; in this sense our civilization is essentially Christian.[3]

cc. The Reaction of the Movement. The reaction is directed against every single function which is essential to the balanced existence of the Christian society. The main attack of

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[2] On the sacramental doctrine see Troeltsch, 1.c., p. 231ff.

[3] See Troeltsch, 1.c., pp. 241ff.

practically all of the movements up to the 17th century is directed against the sacerdotal function and the monopoly of the mediation of Grace through the Sacraments. Out of the sources of immediate religious experience rises again and again the revolt against the objectivity of the sacrament, and is asserted again and again the general priesthood of the layman in the Christian community. Our primary concern in this context is not the doctrinal question, but the political implication. Lay Christianity was a deadly threat not only to the unit of the Church, but insofar as the Church unit was closely related to the imperial unit, it prepared the way for (1) the split of the sacramental organization and the integration of the partial Churches into the rising national communities, and (2) the split of the civilizational unit into the secular state and the disestablished free Churches, thus leaving the secular state exposed to its eventual occupation by religious movements of an anti-Christian nature.[4]

The anti-sacerdotalism is usually accompanied by the withdrawal from the compromise with political power. The typical expressions of this new attitude are indifference toward state authority and the function of the ruling class in general, and in particular the refusal to use the state court system, to take an oath, to take up arms in defense of the community, the ideal of obedience to state power where it does not conflict with the religiously determined ethics of the groups, and of passive resistance to the extreme of suffering death where it does.[5] The anti-etatistic attitude is still to be found in modern sects, as well as in the anarcho-syndical movement, and in the Marxian doctrine of the withering away of the state.

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[4] On the contrast of the „sect-type" and the „church-type" see Troeltsch, 1.c., pp. 331ff.

[5] On sectarian principles see Troeltsch, 1.c., p. 336.

c.   Effects of the Movement on the Institution

Radical unworldliness is possible only on the condition that the complicated structure of our high civilization be disregarded and the social and economic basis of the believers be reduced to simple artisan activities. We notice a preponderance of the artisan element in medieval sect life, and not only factually as a spreading of sects among artisans, but as an ideal which considers handicraft work as the most suitable for a Christian life while commerce would entangle a person in the supposedly inevitable dishonesty of trading. The occupation of Jesus as a carpenter influenced this attitude. The Christian life of poverty and economic quality in a community of believers will find its recruits preponderantly in the lower classes of society, and if it is coupled with indifference or hostile disregard for the political structure it may develop in various forms into revolutionary movements directed against the upper class in its double function as rich and ruling. Social and economic revolution in this sense is an element in several of the medieval sects; it remains an important feature in that phase of modern communism which not only wishes to dispossess the ruling class, but also to supplant the bourgeois civilization by a proletarian civilization – an element which seems to have penetrated into Western Marxism from Russia.[6]

aa. Spiritual Reformation. It is rather difficult to present adequately the effects of the undercurrent movement on the main development of Western Civilization because of the intimate relation between spiritual reformation and civilizational destruction. Hanserd Knollys wrote in his *Glimpse of Sion's Glory* (1641) two sentences which formulate the predicament admirably. "The people of God", he says "have been, and are, a despised people"; and then: "The voice, of Jesus Christ reigning in his Church, comes first from the multitude, the common people. The voice is heard from

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[6] On the lower-class character of the sects see Troeltsch, 1.c., p. 331.

them first, before it is heard from any others. God uses the common people and the multitude to proclaim that the Lord God Omnipotent reigneth". The great institutions are exposed to degeneration from internal causes. The personal of the sacramental Church could and did over long periods degenerate into an organization which used the sacramental monopoly for the acquisition of wealth through the sale of absolution. Monastic orders could and did degenerate, as it was for instance the fate of the Franciscans shortly after their foundation, into enormous property owning enterprises, misusing the willingness of the layman to participate in the monastic existence by means at his dispositions for the extortion of legacies and donations. The accumulation of wealth in the hands of the clergy and the monasteries provoked comparisons with the evangelical ideal of poverty; and the conduct of the ruling class did not live up to the principles of brotherly love. In all these respects the "multitude", the "common people", the "People of God" have a definite revolutionary and reformatory function which we do not find in Hellenic civilization. The imperial institutions and the sectarian movements derive both from the appearance of Jesus and from his teachings; institution and movement are intimately linked and their interrelation creates a peculiar structure of Western political sentiment by virtue of which the degeneration phenomena in the institutional realm produce the feeling of *injustice* against the "common people", while the revolt of the "common people" is accompanied by a feeling of *legitimacy* as an attempt to restore the institution to its former purity. The degeneration of the institution creates a sediment of injustice at the bottom which, transformed by the energies of the movement, streams back as the justice of reform into the body of the institution. The Cathar movement left its traces in the Dominican Order which was the instrument of its suppression; the Waldensian Poor of Lyons have left their traces in the *poverelli* of St. Francis and the Franciscan movement itself has contributed importantly to a temporary

purification of the Church; the movements of the 16th century had the far-reaching consequences of the Reformation and the Counter-Reformation.

bb. Civilizational Destruction – The Fragmentary Civilization. Against the function of purifying reform stands the destructive effect of the movement. In order to signify properly the distinction between the comprehensive civilizational function of the pre-Reformation institutions and the restricted social and cultural sphere of the sect as outlined above, we shall call the latter the bearer of a *fragmentary civilization*. What the sect gives in religious tenseness and purity of conduct it looses in range of civilizational content. The rich Church civilization, giving room to power and rulership, to the wealth of natural differences and social ranks, is reduced in the sect to the petty existence, horizon and education of the lower middle class. The danger to Western Civilization arising from this source could on the whole be mastered before the 16th century through the processes of absorption and suppression referred to before.[7] Typical in this respect is the early history of the Franciscans. They begin as a movement, not differing essentially from other heretical movements of the time; they find cautious support from Innocent III and are recognized by the Pope after long hesitations as the order of the *Fratres Minores*. The problem of the ascetic women in the movement is solved by the organization of the women of a second order, the order of the *Clarisses*. In order to keep under control the possible anti-civilizational tendencies of the broader masses a third order is formed, the *Tertiary Order* of the brethren living in the world. The Order then becomes ecclesiasticized so quickly and thoroughly that the movement character is all but lost; this danger brings to the fore the radical spiritual wing again, and the Spirituals are finally forced out of the Order; they split up and disappear as minor heretical sects while the Order itself

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[7] On the anti-civilizational character of the sects see Troeltsch, 1.c., p. 337.

degenerates and becomes for a time an outstanding scandal of Church-life. With the 16th century the situation changes radically; the gigantic wave of movements cannot be absorbed any more, but combines forces with the rising national sentiment and splits the shaky Church and Empire structure definitely.

d. The Phases of Disintegration

aa. Dissolution of Charisma and Rulership. The disintegration in the institutional sphere follows more or less clearly the following pattern. The state emerges as the organization of the nation, independent of the politico-religious unit of the Empire. The tremendous consequence is the transformation of the political organization into a power unit in the technical sense of power without status of meaning in a universal spiritual institution. It is the development which becomes visible in its fullness for the first time through Machiavelli.* The next phase is marked by the decline of the aristocracy as the European ruling class and by the rise of the bourgeoisie to political influence through participation in, or exclusive domination of, the inherited power apparatus. This second phase is not always clearly understood in its implications. Frequently the bourgeoisie is characterized as the new ruling class, while indeed the problem of bourgeois predominance is incomprehensible if we do not admit that the bourgeoisie as a class, with numerous individual expectations, is an upper class through wealth and through influence on the power apparatus but no a ruling class. The rise of the bourgeoisie has changed the idea of the polity as a power organization with rulers and ruled to that of an anonymous apparatus which is supposed to furnish the protective shelter for the a-political activities of the private person occupied with making a living and, if possible, more than a living. The businessman is not a gentleman, i.e. he is not a warrior and ruler; society becomes a reservation in which the peaceful model-citizen can look to his own affairs while the state as an

instrument for the protection and increase of earning power runs on by a miracle of its own – and actually does, though not through a miracle but by virtue of the remnants of the old ruling class, the tradition of statecraft and historical momentum. This is the change of the Western power institution which has been described by Herbert Spencer as the "progress" from the military to the industrial peaceful society.

bb. The Bourgeois State and the Proletarian Movement. If we thus see the liberal bourgeois state as the Western political organization which has lost the Christian charisma and the ruling class, we understand better the otherwise surprising lack of resistance which it shows against the last great wave from the bottom, against socialism – socialism again understood as a movement, not necessarily crystallized in a party. The possession of wealth gives influence over people, but if it is not combined with spiritual status or ruling qualities it does not carry authority; a class which has inherited privileges without authority of its own is inevitably lost as soon as a movement of the less privileged people challenges their position; the outcome is uncertain only as to the date. The situation has radically changed from that prevailing before the 16th century. The bourgeois state is not a *Sacrum Imperium* but a fragmentary society, deprived of the spiritual forces which are present, though abused, in the sacramental organization. A movement from the bottom cannot any more be digested because the spiritual substance of the upper class is practically dissolved and there is not much left on which the revolt from the bottom could operate in a reformatory way. And the socialist movement from below has shared the fate of modern society; it is for its politically effective sector reduced to the advancement of material and legal claims which are equally devoid of spiritual substance. An institution and a movement oppose one another both preponderantly materialistic. – The impasse seems to be capable of a solution only in one of two ways. Either there will arise in the existing bourgeois institution and socialist

movement leading personalities who are capable of instilling into their groups new values of the spiritual and ruling order; or new leaders will arise, independent of the bourgeois state and the socialist movement, who, endowed with charisma of the ruler and the savior, will be capable of solving the problem, as we see it in the totalitarian movements – "the Caesar with the spirit of Christ" as prophesied by Nietzsche.

cc. Sectarian Ignorance. This outline of the interaction between the medieval institutions and the movements from below with its resulting dissolution of the great imperial creation had to be sketchy and stripped to the bones. But it would be unpardonably incomplete without a reference to the parallel process in the realm of ancillary ideas. The main evolution of ideas in the institutional sphere is treated in preceding and subsequent sections; but there are elements in this evolution intimately connected with the anti-civilizational character of the movements which, therefore, belong in this context. The typical medieval sect with its membership and ideals of lower middle-class towns-people exists as an enclave in the surrounding society and while its religious tension can be absorbed in reforms of conduct and institutions of the greater environment, its mode of life cannot become a model for intimation by the masses without destroying the balanced structure of a great civilization. The religious seriousness and ethical righteousness of the sectarian is not paralleled by an adequate intellectual grasp of social and political problems; in short, the sectarian is a person who fails to understand the subtle compromises on which the civilization in which he lives is based.[8] While the *Sacrum Imperium* can permit itself to be reformed under the spiritual pressure from below, it cannot permit the sectarian to substitute his form of life and his ideas for those of the established society. As soon as a sect tends to spread unduly it becomes a menace which has to be suppressed. This problem

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[8] On this point see Troeltsch, 1.c., p. 337.

does not arise only in connection with the obscurer sects, but also with regard to the leading personalities of the great Reform. He who would look in Luther's reform treatises for ideas concerning the relation of a reformed Christianity to the secular power, would experience a surprise. Luther had no distinct ideas concerning the relation between church and state, and he is so vague on the point that obviously he was not aware that this relation might be a major problem. Here we find the typical movement attitude of the person with strong religious experiences, burning with wrath over the evils of the institution, throwing himself into the revolt without knowing what he is doing. When the movement of which he was a leading figure produced among other unpleasant results the Peasant War, Luther was horrified by the anti-civilizational consequences and fell into the other extreme of inciting to massacres against unhappy peasants, who after all did in their own sphere nothing but what he was doing on the higher level of intellectual and spiritual attack. The disgusted Nietzsche found for Luther the acid formula of the "Peasant Revolt of the Spirit". We meet the type again and again down to the savior who wants to make the world safe for democracy without having more than the haziest notions of what the world is like. On a more moderate level the type is well known to everybody who has experienced the European totalitarian revolutions: the honest soul who foamed at the bad state of the world, joined a movement which promised to clean up and reform, and when the anti-civilizational hell breaks loose comes trembling and assures you "I did not want this" and expects to be comforted by the victim of his stupidity. Ignorance, not as an indifferent lack of knowledge of a private person with regard to indifferent subjects, but as a political force arising out of the sectarian position, ignorance defined as the combination of the limited sectarian horizon with the righteous aggressiveness of the sincere and honest believer, is one of the great forced determining political thought since the Reformation.

dd. The Disintegration in the Realm of Ideas. The main line of disintegration due to ignorance follows the line of fragmentarization of modern political institutions. The fatal symptom of the dissolution of the spiritual medieval power unit is the appearance of the theory of sovereignty, at first as the theory of princely sovereign derived from God, later as the sovereignty of the state and the people. The next step, the destruction of rulership under the pressure of the bourgeois movement expresses itself in the foundation of political society on the contract between persons who limit their liberty to the extent that protective functions of government remain possible. The classic example, containing the aggressive devaluation of the aristocratic claim to rulership, is to be found in Kant's *Metaphysics of Morals.* After the bourgeois destruction of the authority of rulership the proletarian movement, finally, experiences the remaining fragment of Western society as a system of economic relations which should be adjusted in the direction of an equalization of income, because no reason can be given any more why some people should "have" wealth while others "have not". The assumption that the state is identical with economic differentiation leads then to the logical conclusion that with the economic difference the state will "wither away". The institutional structure of Western Civilization, significantly called in Marxian theory a "superstructure", would be whittled away at last by the movement from the bottom.

From the realm of ancillary evocations the fragmentarization penetrates into science proper through the use of evocative ideas as "scientific" explanations of social processes and structures. The development becomes particularly marked since the 19th century when under the pressure of the superstitious belief in science political ideas, which had nothing to do with science whatsoever, had to lay claim to the title of scientific theory. We mentioned earlier the bourgeois sociology, monumentally exemplified through Herbert Spencer, and in the same category belongs the

"scientific" socialism of Karl Marx. From centers of this type broad sections of modern scholars are influenced directly or indirectly. The result is a terrifying destruction of the scope of political and social science; a considerable number of political scientists lack the most elementary knowledge of religious experiences and their expression, they are unable to recognize politico-religious phenomena when they see them; and are unaware of their decisive role in the constitutions of political society; a similar plight has fallen on the fundamental problems of war and peace. Instead we find the fragmentary interpretations of society as an evolution towards a peaceful world order which is lightly disturbed sometimes by regrettable "retrogressions", "barbarisms", resurgence of power politics", etc.; and side by side with the bourgeois evolution we find the interpretation from economic motives reflecting the Marxian strain. The last phase of this development is the nihilistic approach towards politics in the form of "descriptive institutionalism"; this approach abolishes the problems of politics altogether and is satisfied with the registration of "facts". The emergence of the "fact" as the object of political science reflects the destruction of Western civilization; the "facts" of institutionalism are the ruins of a political structure which has lost its spiritual and ethical contents. As man does not go on living in a meaningless world for long, the appearance of the meaningless, irrelevant "fact" is the storm signal of the gigantic revolutions of which we experience at present the first tremblings.

e.   The Social Structure of the Movement

    aa. Movement and Town – The Middle-Class Character. The social structure of the movement before the 17th century is still exposed to certain misunderstandings due to the fact that the scholars who investigated them more closely two generations ago were frequently socialists. They were interested in the forerunners of modern proletarian movements and interpreted the medieval and Reformation

upheavals in this direction. More recently National Socialist scholars have been equally interested in presenting particularly the German Reformation movements as forerunners of National Socialism. Both interpretations have a grain of truth but need qualifications which take proper regard of the earlier social structure. The movements are intimately connected with the rise of the towns as enclaves in a feudal structure which rested with its organization on the rural economy. The town-dweller was a figure not closely interwoven with the predominant system of society. This outsider character, combined with the stronger intellectual activity which accompanies the more gregarious life seems to have made the town the fertile soil of sectarianism. The progress of the movement follows closely the regions of town development. It begins in the 11th century with the Pataria in the towns of Upper Italy, spreads in the towns of Southern France, from there into the rising towns of Picardy (as a weaver's movement), and penetrates from there into the Western German and English towns. The leading figures are typically not the lowest of workers and peasants, but merchants (Petrus Waldes), *jeunesse dorée* (St. Francis), Oxford dons (Wiclif) and their students (the early Lollards, Jan Hus), monks (Luther), priests (in the Swiss cities). This character goes through the movement up to the present with Marx and Engels, the bourgeois intellectual advocates of the workers´ cause, and Lenin, Mussolini and Hitler of lower middle-class origin.

bb. Peasant, Feudal and Bourgeois Support. From this middle-class center the movements spread primarily in town society, but are also taken up and supported by other groups with grievances against the established institutions. Twice we find the movement spread on grand scale into the peasant population: in the English Peasant Revolt of 1381, and outgrowth of the Wiclif movement, and in the German Peasant War of 1524-1525, an outgrowth of the Lutheran reform movement. But this association is occasional, not essential as

is the connection between movement and middle-class. In the English Civil War of the 17th century the lines were not quite clearly drawn, but on the whole the peasants were royalists, while the middle-class and merchants were Parliamentarians. On the other side the movements find political support with the feudal nobility which resists the monarchic centralization in the early middle-ages ; the Albigensian crusade for instance had the double aspect of a crusade of the Church against the heretics, and of a war of the Northern French nobility, depending from the Capetians, against the independent Southern barons. In the German Reformation the success of the movement was largely due to the support of the anti-imperial territorial princes, while the French religious wars of the 16th century were again wars between factions of the nobility. The same situation occurs in the 17th century in the aristocratic Fronde siding with the bourgeois Parliaments. Wiclif received over a time support from John of Gaunt; and the Puritan Revolution is characterized by the goodly sprinkling of great nobility on the Parliamentarian side. In recent years we notice a comparable alliance of an upper class with the movements in the curious support given by the great bourgeoisie to the Fascist and National Socialist movements – a connection which has led some observers to the rash assumption that these movements are "capitalistic" or "reactionary".

f. The Structure of Sentiment of the Movement

      aa. The Problem of Oriental Influence. The structure of sentiment in the movements to which we have now to turn, is rather complicated. The materials fill volumes, and we can do no more than select two or three topics which seem to have a special bearing on the formation of political ideas. We have to become clear, first, about the earlier mentioned methodological question. The type of religious experiences with which we have to deal may roughly be called "Eastern" or "Oriental" in the sense that the great religious

civilizations which are based on their type are to be found in Asia, in Gnostic, Manichaean and Islamic mysticism. The question arises of the influence of Eastern religiousness on the West, a question which does not permit of a clear answer before it is not qualified a bit. Our problem does not concern the influence of Eastern theology or dogma on the West, but the appearance in the West of religious experiences which form in the East the basis of theological systems. The experiences themselves are neither Eastern nor Western, but simply human and can spring up anywhere at any time, though they will neither become socially effective nor penetrate into the sphere of rationalized theology unless the institutional environment favors such expansion. The classic case illustrating the situation is the translation of the mystical writings of Dionysius Areopagita through Scotus Eriugena in the 9th century at the request of Charles the Bald, the subsequent influence on the religious experiences of Eriugena himself as expressed in his *De Divisione naturae*, and the complete ineffectiveness on his time. In the 13th century the work of Eriugena becomes all of a sudden extremely effective through its resumption by Amaury of Chartres and its exposition in courses at the University of Paris. Immediately a sect springs up in the environment of Paris, and shortly afterwards the *De Divisione Naturae* is to be found in numerous copies in Albigensian circles where it corresponds with the Cather religiousness which in its turn has other Oriental "sources". The correct answer to the question seems to be that a type of religious experience which cannot find proper expression in the symbols of the established evocations, i.e. of the institutionalized sacramental Church, of the *Sacrum Imperium* and their theological and political ideas, will seize upon Eastern expressions of a similar religiousness in order to make itself articulate. The process of articulation in its turn will make the religious experiences communicable and capable of social expansion. The undercurrent character of the movements before the 16th century prevents, however, the

crystallization of systems which can be developed by an institutionalized class of theologians or intellectuals in the continuity of school work. There is, therefore no continuity of dogmatic development between Eastern systems and the sectarian ideas, but only a latent "Orientalism" in the movements of the soul which may use for its expression such elements of Oriental systems as happen to penetrate into the Western World. The dogmatic differences between the several movements are, therefore, of scant importance in the present context; we have rather to concentrate on their function as expressions of a common structure of sentiment.

bb. Cathars and Paulicians. A first important complex of sentiments and attitudes is to be found in the Cathar movement which marks the beginning of a long series.[9] The province of Septimania in Southern France, between the Rhone and the Pyrenées, was the ideal setting for heretical movements on a grand scale, because the region had a rich sediment of earlier heretical civilizations beginning with the Christianization of the Pyrenean Celts through the heretic Priscillian sect of the 4th century. From the 5th to the 8th century the province was part of the empire of the Visigoths who were for the first century Arians; in the 8th century it experiences a thorough Islamic wave; and by the 10th and early 11th centuries we find distinct Manichaean traces. From then on the region becomes increasingly part of the great movement which is connected with the migrations of the Paulicians. In 1167 the Synod of Toulouse was presided over by the Paulician Nicetas of Constantinople, whose function in the Paulician movement was comparable to that of a Pope; and the Synod of Albi of 1201 was presided over by his successor

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[9] On the teachings of medieval sects see generally the excellent treatise by Rufus M. Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion*, London 1923. For special questions the reader may be referred to the easily accessible articles of the *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*. The monographic literature is vast and does not bear even a selective listing in this study.

Julian of Palermo, a strong revivalist who gave considerable impetus to the Cathar Movement.

cc. The Paulician Puritanism. If it is possible at all to distinguish in this obscure matter between the Paulician element and the Cathar proper, the dividing line seems to be running somewhat as follows. The Paulicians form part of the general movement of Eastern religiousness which after the 6th century entered, within its cycle, on the phase of Puritanism corresponding to the Western Puritan movement since the 16th century. The Paulicians themselves were a minor movement compared with the two great parallel waves of the Islam and the Byzantine Iconoclastic movement. The relations may be gleaned from the tolerance extended to the Paulicians by Leo the Isaurian in 722, while after the restoration of orthodoxy in the ensuing antiheretical campaign the Paulician and Saracen armies fought side by side against the Greeks in the bloody battle of Samosata (873). The Puritan features which from the beginning of the Western movement seem to have had the great appeal were: (1) the simplification of the sacramental structure through the abolition of infant baptism and its replacement by voluntarily sought adult baptism, using the immersion in a river; (2) the abolition of the hierarchy in favor of a simple rank of minister, the "elect", who is the receiver of the immediate grace of God; (3) the revival of immediate religious experiences through the reading of the New Testament, particularly of the Epistles of St. Paul, by the layman; (4) the return to a primitive conduct of life, if possible to handicraft work.

dd. The Cathar Manichaeism. While these Puritan elements derive from primitive Christianity and as such reappear in the sectarian movements up to the Protestant wave of the great Reformation, we find in Catharism proper in addition other features which are related to Manichaeism. The Puritan elements receive new color if they are seen as expressing the profound religious experience of the world as the battle ground between the forces of light and darkness. The

experience expresses itself in the argument that God who is love cannot be the author of the world which contains darkness and evil. The creation myth assumes, therefore, that God began to create the world, but was interrupted in his work by Satan or the Demiurge who completed it. Man is a fallen angel imprisoned in matter, the place of evil, and it is the task of man to strive for the deliverance from the evil in order to become "catharos", pure spirit again. The Puritan rules of conduct are fitted into this conception of the world. The most oppressive law of matter is procreation. The purification requires, therefore, at least from the highest grade of believer, that of the *perfectus,* not to marry, or if married henceforth not to touch his wife. Purification makes necessary for the same reason certain dietary rules, such as abstention from all food the substance of which is connected with sexual intercourse, i.e. meat, eggs, cheese. All contact with matter in general implies a certain defilement and should be reduced to a minimum. This rule requires to ignore the attachment to matter which is implied in individual proprietorship and to restrict labor to a minimum which is necessary for the sustenance of life. The complete deliverance can come only through death, but death will bring condemnation unless preceded by a purifying life. On the question of purgatory, therefore, the Cathars held unorthodox views, believing the life in this world to be the purgatory which will be succeeded after death immediately by complete deliverance or condemnation. As a consequence death becomes desirable, and it seems that suicide was considered permissible, particularly if it took the form of extending the *endura*, the fast after the initiation as *perfectus*, to the limit of death starvation. We have to revert later to this very consequential desire for death.

ee. Scotus Eriugena – The *De Divisione Naturae*. The Cathar attitude is, however, only one form that can be given to the basic experience. Other possibilities are indicated in the before mentioned *De Divisione Naturae* of Scotus Eriugena which found favor in Cathar circles around 1200,

shortly before the crusade. In the theology of Eriugena, strongly influenced by Dionysius Areopagita, God is the non-created creative ground and principle of all things; through "procession" he reveals himself in an immaterial world of ideas of prototypes, a world which is created and creating, for the prototypes are dynamic and create for themselves in a further "procession" the body of the material world. The world of matter is mere appearance; the substance of things consists in their immaterial prototypes. In a last "procession" the world of things, visible and invisible, passes into the intellectual stage of perfect union with God, the non-created con-creating, the Alpha and Omega of creation. The world is thus a vast theophany, emanating from God and returning into him. For us the decisive phases in this conception are (1) the new version of the two worlds of invisible prototypes and visible appearing things, and (2) the purifying deliverance in the return to God. The structure of man, like that of all appearing things, contains as its core the prototype emanating from God; and through that divine ground of his person contemplation becomes possible as a concentration of the soul into its divine part and as a mystical union with God. Who is capable of descending into his own ground will enter into union with God; through beholding he becomes what he beholds, through understanding he becomes what he understands. Here we find outlined as the alternative to deliverance through death, the deliverance and deification through contemplation of this life.

ff. Amaury of Chartres – The Third Dispensation. In the teaching of Amaury of Chartres and of the movements which were influenced by it, the historical dimension is added to this conception of the world. The doctrine of the sect seems to have been that under the dispensation of the Old Testament God had acted under the form of Law; that under the New Testament he worked through Christ and the Sacramental Church; and that now, under the third dispensation, the Holy Spirit manifests himself immediately in the souls of the believers. Under the reign of the Holy Spirit no sacraments are

needed for the mediation of Grace, but God as the Spirit becomes incarnate in every man as he was incarnate in Christ. We need not follow the implications of this doctrine through the maze of sects, but can outline them systematically.

       gg. The Worlds of Darkness and Light – Extreme Cases. The basic idea which runs through the sectarian movement is that of the two world, the world of light and the world of darkness, the worlds of God and of Satan, of Spirit and of Matter. In order to understand the dichotomy fully it is important to distinguish it carefully from modern theories of matter and psychological processes. The Manichaean variation as well as that of Scotus Eriugena and that of the 13th century sects see the given world as the product of the interpenetration of two forces, the forces of Light and Darkness. In the coarser popular conception, which is relevant for us, this means that the structure of the two worlds is identical and that they are differentiated only by the forces operating in them. The establishment of the world of Light does not do away with the structure of the world as we know it; the world is preserved but the evil is taken out of it. The deliverance from the evil does not mean death, but on the contrary life in this world, only freed from the forces of darkness. It is an outstanding case of the great dream of mankind, of the dream to eat your cake and keep it, which always appeals to the poor in the mind. For the deliverance of the individual human being the idea means that either through an act of grace pure and simple, or through an act of grace which is brought about through the *will* of the individual, the person can free itself, body and soul, of darkness and become deified not only as to its souls, but also as to its body. In the sects we find, therefore, persistently a wing which interprets purification as meaning that after its achievement the "light"-person cannot commit sin; it has become identical with the divine substance and God cannot sin. Whatever the person does under the pressure of impulse cannot be considered sinful if committed by the pure person, even if the behavior would be considered licentious, immoral

or criminal in the case of an impure person. The person who is resurrected from the flesh as a "perfect", an "elect", or a "saint" is beyond all evil; he has no need of the sacramental aid of the institutional Church, nor is he bound by the laws of the secular power or by the customs of society.

The meaning of the two worlds identical in structure, differing in the spiritual principle, and the transition from the one to the other, can best be gathered from the extreme cases. One of the members of the society which followed Amaury "declared that he could not be burnt, because there was something of God in him".[10] A Dutch Anabaptist unbalanced by the pressure of persecution ran naked in the street and cried: "I am the naked truth". The best modern case is the creed of Mary Baker Eddy entertaining the idea of a perfect world which has the same structure as the present, minus disease, death and other obstructions of matter.

hh. Puritan Ideas – Hanserd Knollys, Thomas Collier. Up to the 16th century the experience of the two worlds and the idea of the abolition of evil by simply entering the world of light was on the whole successfully suppressed and did not interfere with the institutions on a large scale. The danger line, however, has become visible in Amaury's idea of the third dispensation. When the idea of the third realm (which we had to discuss earlier in the Gioachitic philosophy of history) fills up with definite ideas about a desirable social order, and particularly when it absorbs the stream of Israelitic eschatology, we arrive at the stage of movements which want to transform the existing society by the short-circuit of a purifying revolution into a realm of light within the living generation. The character of this stage appears clearly in the earlier quoted *Sion's Glory* of Hanserd Knollys (1641). Says he: "The whole world is purchased by Christ, and purchased for the Saints, that is Christ´s aim. *All is yours*, says the Apostle, *the whole world:* and therefore (Rev. 21.7) it is said,

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[10] Rufus M. Jones, *Studies in Mystical Religion.* MacMillan 1923, p. 188.

The Saints shall inherit all things. You see that the Saints have little now in the world; now they are the poorest and meanest of all; but then when the adoption of the sons of God shall come in the fullness of it, the world shall be theirs; for the world is purchased for them by Jesus Christ. *Not only heaven shall be your kingdom, but this world bodily.*" To the question how these things will come about, he answers: "It is God Omnipotent who shall do these things, by that power, *whereby he is able to subdue all things unto himself.* Mountains shall be made plain, and he shall come skipping over mountains and difficulties. Nothing shall hinder him." As to the date of the event he calculates on the basis of Daniel 12.11 that the new Sion will begin in 1650 and reach its completion in 1695.[11]

A certain theological difficulty is offered by the word "My kingdom is not of this world". The argument of overcoming is of the greatest importance in the structure of this body of ideas. Thomas Collier explained in a Sermon on the *Discovery of the New Creation*, delivered at the army-headquarters at Putney on Sept. 29, 1647: "It's true we have had, and still have, exceeding low and carnal thoughts of heaven, looking on it as a glorious place above the firmament, out of sight, and not to be enjoyed till after this life."[12] The argument is that the conception of an otherworldly Kingdom of God is a materialistic idea, while the spiritual conception demands the possibility of a world identical in structure with the present but penetrated by the Spirit of God. Another formula for this idea is contained in the *Queries* presented to Lord Fairfax in February 1649. The objection of the saying of Christ is answered: "But he doth not say, It shall not be upon the earth, nor while the earth remains."[13] "World" and "earth"

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[11] *Puritanism and Liberty,* Being the Army Debates (1667-9) from the Clarke Manuscripts with Supplementary Documents. Selected and edited with an Introduction by A.S.P. Woodhouse, London 1938, pp. 240 ff.

[12] *Puritanism and Liberty,* p. 390.

[13] l.c., p. 244.

are distinguished; the first as meaning the world of evil and the world of light; the second as meaning the structure of the finite existence of man. The meaning which we usually associate with the word "otherworldly" is discarded as materialistic.

ii. The Changing Content of the World of Light. The content of the new world is determined by the ideals of the time and, therefore, varies greatly. We can observe, however, that it generally is connected with a redistribution and earthly advantages and the transfer of the coveted position of the upper class of the time to the lower class, though sometimes we find curious desires stemming from Bible-reading. We noticed the "bodily" transfer of the world from the present rulers to the Saints with Knollys, but we find with him also the prophesy that "The Saints shall be clothed in white linen, which is the righteousness of the Saints". The turning of the table of the Israelitic eschatology remains a feature of the movements up to the formula of Karl Marx of "the expropriation of the expropriators". As an ethical claim the formula would be questionable; but the principle draws its force from the mystic experience that through this supreme act the world of iniquity will be transformed into a world of righteousness. The argument that the adjustment of social grievances does not preclude the rise of new situations in need of adjustment, that social reforms do not change the nature of man, and that after a reform the world will be in its fundamental structure just as good or bad as it was before, is of no avail against the belief in the ultimate transfiguration.

The Marxian anthropology is based, just as the Puritan, on the belief that through the revolutionary transforming act the nature of man will change from its present state of perfection which will make social compulsion unnecessary. The only difference is that the earlier movements believe in the change through an act of God, while in the sphere of modern superstition the change can be effected through a change in the economic structure of society. The details of the content, as we said, vary with the change of civilization. In the

period of predominantly agricultural society the perfect state requires the distribution of land, from the Diggers of the Puritan Revolution to the Russian peasants of 1917. In the 19th century we find in the works of Marx and Engels the ideal of transforming the industrial worker into a bourgeois as far as his education is concerned. The increase of industrial productivity is supposed to reduce the working hours to a degree where the worker has leisure to acquire a bourgeois education. With the actual increase of productivity the possibility of leisure for education became less fascinating than the improvement of the standard of living and the identification of leisure-time with play-time. The modern technical comfort is reflected in the paradisic ideals of "All God's chilluns have a Ford", and "All good Germans have a People's Car". The time where the Saints wanted to sit around in white gowns like angels is past.[14]

g. Methods of Conviction
aa. The Muenster Kingdom – Display of Luxury. A politically important aspect of the movements is brought out by the revealing history of the New Jerusalem of the Anabaptists under Jan van Leyden in Muenster (1534-1535). The Muenster Kingdom was patterned on old Testament ideas. Jan van Leyden was crowned like David as the King of the New Zion, understood as the nucleus which should expand into the rule over the world. Jan was an excellent political psychologist, a young man of great personal graces (when he died he was 25 years of age), who knew how to master the people oratorically. He appealed to the people through the display of luxury. He had two big golden crowns, a royal and the imperial; was attired with a golden sword in a golden belt; appeared in public with heralds and trumpets, riding on a white horse, had a horse-guard and food-guard which surrounded the throne at public functions; and organized a

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[14] Goering has a great liking for white uniforms.

gorgeously garbed court. All this in a beleaguered town with a slowly starving population, having almost no personal property of their own. And the people liked it. The differentiation of rank, the display of luxury by the ruling group, the severest concentration of dictatorial power which under ordinary circumstances as the cause of unrest and revolt become tolerated and even desired features if the new order is believed to be the new dispensation in the struggle between darkness and light. Observers who are bewildered because the people, which could be aroused by the National Socialist denunciation of the extremely modest benefits and luxuries of politicians and trade-union leaders under the Weimar Republic, acquiesces and delights in the display of luxury by the new rulers, should read the history of the Muenster Kingdom in order to understand the curious operations of the movement psychology.

bb. Sensual Conviction. One element in the problem of luxury under a new dispensation deserves special attention. In one respect the gratification of desire is, of course, determined by cheap instincts. When in the polygamic organization of the Muenster Kingdom with an average of three women to one man, Jan van Leyden took on him the burden of entertaining a harem of some fourteen ladies, we can infer from the related details of the situation that he was not only zealous to obey the ordinance of his realm, but took care to put aside for himself the more attractive daughters of the best families. But on the whole the pageantry was well calculated to convince the people sensually of the glory of the new Kingdom. Sensual conviction of the existence of power-reality is, of course, important under all circumstances; he would be a bad statesman who would neglect this instrument for stabilizing his position. But it acquires a specific importance in the movement atmosphere when the mass has to be convinced of the existence of a realm of light which on every turn is in danger of collapsing under the uncouth impact of finite human existence. The methods of sensual conviction

which under these circumstances might rather be called methods of intoxication have a wide range. The support of ecstasy through drugs, as for instance the use of hashish by the Ismailian fraternity of the Assassins (1190-1256), is a rare occurrence in movements of any socially effective size, though it is an important element in movements ranging from 18th century Spleen to the Bohème; in a large movement in the West it occurred, as far as I can see, only once, in the case of the Ranters who made excessive use of tobacco for ecstatic purposes; the sect was widespread, but not long-lived and seems to have been superseded mainly by the rising Quakers. Most of the other methods, as far as they have become politically relevant, appear in the National Socialist catalogue of intoxication techniques and we shall get a fairly good picture by surveying them.

First should be mentioned the techniques of inducing intoxication through body movements. The great mass-instrument for this purpose is the carefully cultivated practice of marching; the rhythmical sway of the march in community, continued for hours, relaxes the personality tension; it produces a state of exhaustive dissolution of the individual in the group rhythm and permits thus the collective unit to blot out the personality concentration. A similar blotting-out effect is produced by the situation of the individual in organized mass-meetings. Closely related to, and usually combined with marching is community singing and the use of the *Landsknecht*-drum, an Oriental instrument introduced to the West as the name indicates in the *Landsknecht*-period, for the accentuation of the march-rhythm as well as for its immediate sensual effects. Noise as such for the purpose of disintegrating personality is systematically used in National Socialist conquests in the form of the motor drone of airplanes, flying in brief intervals over a city or region which has to be subdued. The drone of airplane motors seems to have a particularly strong effect on the nervous system and helps in breaking psychological resistance. The supreme instrument of sensual

conviction is, of course, the threat with physical annihilation. The feeling of being helplessly exposed to torture and death at any moment, the life in the shadow of the executioner has singular effects on the convictions of people. The curious behavior of the accused in the Moscow purge trials should be seen under this aspect; particularly as the instrument of terror as operating in this case on convinced communists, that is to say on persons who were unbalanced in the first place and carried to political action on a wave of sectarian ignorance and anxieties.

cc. The Ritual Speech. The second great group of intoxicating techniques operates on the mind directly through the use of language symbols. The direct speech can become the instrument of creating and sustaining the ecstatic experiences which convince of the reality of the new dispensation. The first rank in this respect has the *ritual speech* by the leader of the movement. The speeches of Hitler on the solemn occasions of preparing new steps of the expansion, or of reporting successes, have a well-known, definite structure. They begin with the denunciation of the treaty of Versailles and of the evils ensuing under the Weimar Republic, refer in further course of the Revolution, and give an account of the achievements of the new regime. Uncomprehending reporters make slighting remarks that it is always "the same old story". But "the same old story" is of the essence as the ritual drama, reenacting the great transition from the realm of darkness to the realm of light achieved through the movement. The "old story" cannot be omitted because the contraposition of darkness and light recreates in the souls of the believing hearers the religious drama without which the revolution would have no meaning. The simplification of the issues, the loading of the contraposition with heavy invective, the factual incorrectness of statements which arouses criticisms on the part of the outsiders, are all essential to the movement character of the ritual. If the criticisms directed against the former state of things were fair and just, if the outlook on the

world and its problems were realistic, if the finiteness of creaturely existence were acknowledged, in brief if would be acknowledged that the evil of the world can be relieved but not removed through human action – then there would be no movement.

dd. Propaganda. The everyday maintenance of the conviction requires various practices which may be classified roughly as *propaganda*. I can select only one or two basic problems. In its original use the term propaganda denoted the act of propagating an idea, a cause, or a view by making people aware of its existence, by familiarizing them with its content and merits, in order, if possible, to produce in them a favorable attitude towards the propagated cause. The basis of the activity in the ideal case is the belief on the part of the propagator in the *objective* correctness of his facts and the *objective* merits of his principles, and the belief that he can convince through the impact of the *reality* with which he tries to familiarize another person. The effect of propaganda is supposed to be an enlargement of the intellectual and moral horizon of the person under propaganda, and enlargement that will induce him to take the desired attitude. In this sense every attempt of a person to convince another of the rightness of his opinion through argument and presentation of facts would be propagated; and it is advisable, therefore, to restrict the meaning of the term to organized attempts at conviction which emanate from organized groups.

The modern broad popular meaning of propaganda has changed considerably from the original. Let us first consider the change which expresses itself in the idea of propaganda entertained by the average democratic citizen. Every language expression in general concerning a political question, whether it emanates actually from an organized group or is only suspected of it, whether it purports to be a factual information, an argument, or a statement of principle, comes under the title of "propaganda". Propagation of a cause is not understood by the average citizen as an attempt to enlarge his horizon of

reality, intellectually and morally, and through increase of knowledge and transformation of his ethical personality to produce a change of his attitude, but as an attempt to disturb his existence and his fixed horizon with the intention of swaying him in a direction which he would never take on his own initiative, and thus to misuse his person for purposes which are foreign to his real interests. It is a *status quo* attitude which distrusts and resists any information of argument and disrupts the universe of discourse in which according to the classic idea of democracy opinions are formed. The man who has this attitude will stigmatize the factual element of any information as "rationalization". Through these reactions he devaluates informations and arguments which might open up sections of reality hitherto unknown to him, and classifies them *functionally* as means for an end which he knows all too well, for the end of enlisting his person in a power struggle which is none of his business. The political power field is seen as an open field of naked power interests, devoid of moral substance; the appeals which are made through language symbols by any organized group appear all on the same *functional* level, while the *content* of the appeal is discounted as irrelevant. The attitude implies a self-interpretation which coincides with the earlier given movement characteristics. The person in question confines himself to his lower-class petty horizon; he is not capable or willing to integrate the surrounding political reality as to its factual and axiomatic content into his limited range of experiences, and adopts defensive attitudes against any impact of the wider reality of the civilization in which he lives.

Let us now consider, thirdly, the modern problem of propaganda from the point of view of the propagator. If he has to operate on the personality type just described, his task is difficult if not hopeless, as long as he endeavors to build his propaganda on the principle of sincerely influencing and enlarging the citizen's horizon of reality. The hardened, anti-civilizational, fragmentary existence can be opened up, if at

all, only through long painful educational processes under exceptional circumstances; the older generation probably will have to be dismissed as lost once the type has become a mass phenomenon. If, however, the fragmentary, anti-civilizational existence begins under certain conditions, as for instance economic insecurity and the feeling of resentment against its inferior social position, to "move", new possibilities for propaganda develop. The propagator still cannot operate on his objects as far as their horizon of reality is concerned; but he can operate on the soul in its state of anxiety and evoke the symbols of darkness and light through conscious psychological techniques. These techniques renounce any attempt at building up an opinion through factual information or argumentative clarification; they have on the contrary to destroy such elements of reality in the world content of the people as might counteract the purposes of the propagator, for he has to focus the movement of the soul on "facts" real or unreal, which help to fix the dark and light images. Any facts or arguments conflicting with these images by reintroducing elements of reality have to be systematically excluded as a possible danger to the effectiveness of the movement symbols. The propagator is assisted materially in his double task of focusing and excluding by the persons on which he has to operate, because the moving soul is interested itself in the effectiveness of the symbols and refuses to look left or right in order not to become aware of contradictions. One of the characteristics of the earlier phases of the National Socialist movement was the voluntary censorship which the believers imposed on themselves by refusing to be contaminated by conflicting evidence which was amply accessible through press and speech before the rise to power. Any attempt to involve a believer in rational discourse will be resented by him bitterly and produce angry and vicious reactions. The attempt to introduce conflicting evidence is not any more an "argument", but "provocation".

The question of world-content enters into propaganda in this sense only insofar as the images and their elements must not be entirely at variance with everyday experience – it would not do any good, for instance, to develop a darkness image of the physical characteristics of „the Jew" if no specimens could be found in reality at all which resemble the type from afar; but it is entirely sufficient if now and then a "type-true" (*typenecht*) specimen can be produced, and the stark incorrectness of the image in the multitude of cases will do no harm. On the contrary, the idea of "type-trueness" (*Typenechtheit*) has been evoked in order to be used as a means of attack against unhappy individuals who have the particular insolence of not being "type-true". If a Jew is a pleasant, intelligent, good-hearted, charitable fellow, such characteristics indicate the sinister cleverness by virtue of which the "Anti-Race" conceals its real darkness. Not to be "type-true" is considered a mythical guilt. Under these circumstances the problem which is of prime importance in the formation of reality-based opinion, the problem of correcting and changing opinions in order to adapt them to new facts and arguments, does practically not exist. The image is stable and has to remain so; the propagandist has to reiterate statements and arguments in order to sustain by the very reiteration the conviction of the ultimate truth of the images. Aldous Huxley has caught the problem in his quip: "Ten thousand repetitions make one truth". The world of images created through propaganda is a world of meanings drawing their life and strength from the movement of the soul; the movement is their reality, while the vast content of Western Civilization with its deep historical dimension is reduced to a minimum. The world of propaganda images is in this respect the anti-pole to the world of "facts" which appears in descriptive institutionalism. The world of "facts" which have lost meaning and the world of meanings which have lost reality are the correlative symptoms of the profound destruction of Western Civilization.

Namensregister

Anmerkungen des Herausgebers

Abgesehen von der Korrektur kleinerer Schreibfehler sowie der Durchpaginierung der Anmerkungen wurde das Originalmanuskript unverändert übertragen; Unterstreichungen Voegelins wurden kursiv gesetzt. Zum besseren Verständnis des Textes empfiehlt sich ein Blick in die „Introduction", die Voegelin kurze Zeit zuvor entworfen und in der er das theoretische Grundkonzept zu der *History of Political Ideas* skizziert hatte. In ihr geht er insbesondere auf Begriffe wie „Idea", „Theory" und „Evocation" ein, die auch im Abschnitt „The People of God" von zentraler Bedeutung sind. Eric Voegelin, „Introduction", in: Peter J. Opitz (Hrsg.), Zwischen Evokation und Kontemplation, *Occasional Paper*s, XI, München: Eric Voegelin Archiv, Januar 2002².

*S. 5. Der Begriff „sentiment" spielte insbesondere im ursprünglichen Konzept der *History of Political Ideas* eine wichtige Rolle, obwohl er in der „Introduction" selbst nicht auftaucht, sondern von Voegelin lediglich in den verschiedenen Kapiteln immer wieder verwendet wird. Dies dürfte einer der Gründe dafür sein, dass bis heute keine Untersuchung vorliegt, in der Bedeutung und Funktion des Begriffs „sentiment" erschöpfend behandelt werden. Am umfassendsten und gelungensten geschieht dies noch immer in Thomas Hollweck, Mythos und Geschichte. Zur Genesis von *Order and History*, in: *Occasional Papers*, XIX, S. 7-22, wo sentiments als „Denkerfahrungen, geistige Haltungen, pneumatische Einbrüche in die magische Welt der evokativen Institutionen" (S. 18) charakterisiert werden. Diese Charakterisierung befindet sich mit der Verwendung des Begriffs in der 1941-Fassung von „The People of God" in Einklang, in der er ein gutes halbes Dutzend mal auftaucht. So spricht Voegelin gleich zu Beginn von dem „millenial drama of the sentiments and ideas which are in revolt against the institutional superstructure of our civilisation" und an anderer Stelle thematisiert

er die „Structure of Sentiment of the Movement" (S. 18). Insbesondere an dieser Stelle wird der enge Bezug der Begriffe „sentiment" und „experience" deutlich, ist doch im folgenden immer wieder von der „religious experience" die Rede sowie von „expressions of the common structure of sentiment."(S. 55) Der Eindruck drängt sich daher auf, als verwende Voegelin den Begriff „sentiment" in der Bedeutung von „Stimmungen" und „mentalen Einstellungen", die sich aus neuen geistigen bzw. religiösen Erfahrungen speisen und ein noch unreflektiertes und das heißt zumeist diffuses, sich wandelndes „Lebensgefühl" zum Ausdruck bringen. Im Kontext der Begrifflichkeit der „Introduction" heißt das, dass „sentiments" sowohl die Abwendung von einer alten „Evokation" bzw. des evozierten Kosmos – insgesamt oder einzelner Bereiche – wie auch die Hinwendung zu einer neuen Evokation signalisieren. Siehe dazu das Kap. „Joachim of Fiore" in der *History of Political Ideas*, Vol. 2, S. 126-134, wo gleich auf den ersten Seiten vom „sentiment of the new age" die Rede ist, das mit Joachim von Fiore „the stage of reflective consciousness" erreichte und in deutlichem Kontrast zu den „Augustinian sentiments concerning the structure of history" steht, die das Mittelalter beherrscht hatten. Im Kontext einer Ideengeschichte waren die „sentiments" also ein ebenso wichtiger Gegenstand der Analyse wie die „Ideen" selbst, spiegeln und vollziehen sich auf der Ebene der „sentiments" doch die langfristigen und tiefgreifenden Wandlungsprozesse, die die geistigen Umbrüche vorbereiten.

*S. 15. Siehe seine Darstellung der politischen Philosophie Machiavellis in: Eric Voegelin, „Die spielerische Grausamkeit der Humanisten". Eric Voegelins Studien zu Niccolò Machiavelli und Thomas Morus. Vorwort und Übersetzung von Dietmar Herz, mit einem Nachwort von Peter J. Opitz, München: Wilhelm Fink (Periagoge).

Inhaltsverzeichnis der Fassung von 1941

Chapter 2. The People of God

Quelle: Anlage zum Brief Voegelins an Leo Strauss vom 9. Dez. 1942.

Inhaltsverzeichnis der Fassung von 1948

Chapter 3. The People of God

PETER J. OPITZ: NACHWORT DES HERAUSGEBERS

Das vorangehende Manuskript hatte Eric Voegelin ziemlich genau vor 60 Jahren veröffentlichen wollen. Am 29. November 1942 hatte Leo Strauss Voegelin – beide befanden sich in der Emigration in den USA – an einen „halb-versprochenen Aufsatz" für die Zeitschrift *Social Research* erinnert, dessen Herausgeber-Gremium Strauss zu jener Zeit angehörte.[1] Unter Hinweis auf seine intensiven Arbeiten an der *History of Political Ideas (=History)*, deren Abgabe zu jener Zeit längst überfällig war, bat Voegelin um Nachsicht und Verständnis dafür, für einen selbständigen Artikel derzeit keine Zeit zu haben. Stattdessen bot er Strauss den Vorabdruck eines der schon fertig vorliegenden Kapitel der *History* an. Um die Ernsthaftigkeit seines Angebots zu unterstreichen, legte er seinem Brief – wie er schrieb – ein „verhältnismäßig selbständiges Stück zur Ansicht bei" und bot an, bei Bedarf Retuschen vorzunehmen, „die für eine selbständige Publikation wahrscheinlich nötig sind".[2]

Am 13. Februar 1943 gab Strauss einen Zwischenbericht über den Stand der Dinge. Er habe – so schrieb er – inzwischen mit verschiedenen Mitgliedern des Herausgeber-Gremiums gesprochen, und die Meinung über diese „sehr interessante, geistreiche, ja hinreißende Arbeit" sei sehr gut. Die geäußerten Einwände seien rein technischer Natur: Sie bestünden zum einen in einem grundsätzlichen Unbehagen über den Vorabdruck von Buchkapiteln und bezögen sich zum anderen auf die

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[1] Brief vom 29. November 1942 von Leo Strauss an Eric Voegelin; zum Verhältnis von Voegelin und Strauss siehe Peter Emberley / Barry Cooper, *Faith and Political Philosophy: The Correspondence of Leo Strauss and Eric Voegelin*, University Park, Pennsylvania: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993.

[2] Brief vom 9. Dezember 1942 von Voegelin an Straus.

Länge des Manuskripts – 25 Manuskriptseiten seien für die Zeitschrift das Maximum. Möglicherweise waren die technischen Einwände aber doch größer gewesen als Strauss dies angedeutet hatte. Jedenfalls erkundigte er sich gleichzeitig, ob Voegelin als Kompromiss einen etwa 25-seitigen Essay über „Sektenmentalität in der Politik" schreiben wolle. Obwohl Voegelin grundsätzlich zu Kürzungen des Manuskripts bereit war – so schlug er vor, das Schlusskapitel „Methods of Conviction" zu streichen, was den Text auf die erforderliche Länge bringen würde[3] –, kam es dann doch nicht zu einer Publikation. Stattdessen einigte man sich darauf, dass Voegelin nach Abschluss der *History* den von Strauss angeregten Beitrag über die „Sektenmentalität in der Politik" für *Social Research* schreiben würde.[4]

Das Kapitel aus der *History of Political Ideas*, um das es in der Korrespondenz zwischen Voegelin und Strauss ging, trug den Titel „The People of God". Es wird in den Korrespondenzen Voegelins erstmals am 6. Mai 1941 in einem Brief an Fritz Morstein Marx, den Herausgeber der Textbook-Reihe, in der die *History* erscheinen sollte, erwähnt. Marx hatte sich mit Voegelin schon im April 1940 auf den 1. September desselben Jahres als möglichen Abgabetermin für die *History* verständigt[5] und sich in den folgenden Wochen wiederholt nach dem Fortgang der Arbeiten erkundigt. Zu seiner Information hatte ihm Voegelin deshalb am 6. Mai 1941 einen kurzen Arbeitsbericht geschickt, mit einem – wie er schrieb – „detaillierten

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[3] Brief vom 20. März 1943 von Voegelin an Strauss.

[4] Zur Entstehungsgeschichte der *History of Political Ideas* siehe Peter J. Opitz, Vom „System der Staatslehre" zur Philosophie der Politik und Geschichte, in: Eric Voegelin*, Ordnung und Geschichte,* hrsg. von Peter J. Opitz und Dietmar Herz, Band I: *Die kosmologischen Reiche des Alten Orients – Mesopotamien und Ägypten*, hrsg. von Jan Assmann, München 2002, S. 225-286.

[5] Brief vom 8. April 1940 von Marx an Voegelin.

Inhaltsverzeichnis" jener Teile, die für die Publikation fertig
vorlagen. Dazu teilte er erläuternd mit:

> „The enclosed table is for the larger part self-explanatory, but
> a few remarks may prove helpful. I have divided the subject-
> matter, as you see, into the upper stratum of ideas and the
> undercurrent movements. The paragraph on The People of
> God gives as survey (30 MS.-pages) of the *Movements from
> the tenth century to the present* (Hervorh. P.J.O.), which
> means that it contains the revolution-problem, medieval and
> modern. This makes it possible to isolate the rational systems
> of ideas and treat them very succinctly without burdening
> their presentation with extensive explanations of the situation.
> I am working now on the "Saints" from Bodin to Rousseau in
> a series of short paragraphs. (Incidentally the People of God
> is in my opinion a very important synthesis of the dynamics
> of Western ideas, which has never been given in this way)."[6]

Die Passage vermittelt einen ersten Eindruck davon, wie sich
Voegelin die konzeptionelle Gestaltung der modernen Periode
in der *History* vorstellte, an der er – wie er Marx einleitend
schrieb – gerade arbeitete. Seine kurzen Hinweise zeigen, dass
die Darstellung der westlichen Moderne offenbar von Anfang
an als eine Art Parallelunternehmen angelegt war: Auf der
oberen Ebene sollten, beginnend mit Machiavelli, die „ratio-
nalen Ideensysteme" behandelt werden, während sich eine
zweite Ebene mit dem politischen Denken von Bewegungen
befasste, die vom Mittelalter bis in die Gegenwart reichten.
Das auf dieser Ebene dargestellte und durch die christlichen
Sektenbewegungen repräsentierte Denken war deshalb von
Bedeutung, als es die scharfe Zäsur überbrückte, die in den

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[6] Brief vom 6. Mai 1941 von Voegelin an Marx. Ein weiterer Hinweis auf
den Text findet sich in der Korrespondenz mit Maximilian Mintz, der am 25.
Mai 1941 Voegelin schreibt: „The People of God habe ich persönlich sehr
genossen dank meiner Vertrautheit mit Ihren Gedankengängen, vielleicht
auch dank eigenen öfteren Überdenkens der Probleme, mit denen das
Kapitel sich befasst."

geistesgeschichtlichen Darstellungen Mittelalter und Neuzeit häufig trennen. So folgten etwa in George H. Sabine's 1937 erschienener und schnell zum Standardwerk aufgestiegener *A History of Political Theory* dem Kapitel über die Konziliarstheorie, mit dem der Teil über „Theory of the Universal Community" schloss, die Kapitel über Machiavelli und über die frühen protestantischen Reformer, die den Teil „Theory of the National State" einleiteten.[7] Damit bildete das Kapitel „People of God" zugleich das bis dahin fehlende Zwischenglied, das die ideologischen Massenbewegungen des 20. Jahrhunderts, deren Entstehung durch die Traditionen auf der oberen Ebene nur unzureichend erklärt werden konnte, bis zu ihren geistigen Wurzeln im Mittelalter zurückführte. Dass Voegelin die modernen politischen Bewegungen und die durch sie gegründeten „innerweltlichen Gemeinschaften" nicht als ein spezifisch modernes Phänomen ansah, hatte er schon 1938 in seiner Studie *Die politischen Religionen* angedeutet. An diese Schrift knüpfte er mit seinen Studien über die Sektenbewegungen nun ganz offensichtlich an. Bezeichnenderweise spielt in beiden Texten die trinitarische Geschichtskonzeption von Joachim von Fiore die zentrale Rolle bei der Konstituierung des modernen Denkens.

Voegelins großes Interesse an einer Vorveröffentlichung gerade dieses Kapitels der *History* – sein Brief an Marx schließt mit dem Hinweis, er wolle das Manuskript auch Waldemar Gurian zur Ansicht schicken, der ihn um weitere Manuskripte für die von ihm mit herausgegebene *Review of Politics* dränge[8] – war sachlich vor allem in dieser Position des politischen Denkens der Sektenbewegungen als Verbindungsglied zwischen dem Mittelalter und der Moderne begründet. Hinzu kam, dass Voegelin überzeugt war, hier auf einen, in den poli-

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[7] George H. Sabine, *A History of Political Theory*, New York 1937.

[8] In der vorhandenen Korrespondenz Voegelins mit Gurian, die allerdings große Lücken aufweist, findet sich dafür keine Hinweis.

tischen Ideengeschichten bis dahin vernachlässigten Aspekt gestoßen zu sein – „one of the darkest corners in the history of politcial ideas", wie es im Manuskript heißt –, auf den er verständlicherweise die Aufmerksamkeit lenken wollte. Bezeichnenderweise nutzte er auf einer Konferenz der *American Political Science Association* im Herbst 1944 eine Vortrag zum Thema „Political Theory and the Pattern of General History", um auf diese Forschungslücke hinzuweisen. In ihm machte er darauf aufmerksam, dass die beiden wichtigsten Werke zum politischen Denken im Mittelalter – Alexander Carlyles *History of Medieval Political Theory* sowie Alois Dempfs *Sacrum Imperium* – die Sektenbewegungen unberücksichtigt ließen:

> „Both treaties fail to include the body of literature connected with the sectarian movements. These movements constitute one of the important "parallel" streams of history; it merges with the main Western stream in the Reformation and gives to post-medieval politics one of those supposedly "modern" touches due to the elevation to the main level of civilizational development of political habits and thoughts which in the Middle Ages remained sub-institutional. For these gaps we possess, however, a rich monographic literature, amidst which should be mentioned two great American contributions: the studies on medieval institutions by Professor McIlwain and the studies on mystical religion by Rufus M. Jones."[9]

Neben den Arbeiten von Ernst Troeltsch scheinen denn auch Rufus M. Jones' 1923 erschienene Studie *Studies in Mystical Religion* sowie das 1938 von A.S.P. Woodhouse herausgegebene Werk *Puritanism and Liberty* die wichtigsten Schriften gewesen zu sein, auf die sich Voegelin stützte. Den unmittelbaren Anstoß hatte er möglicherweise von der Lektüre von Edward Gibbons, *Decline and Fall of the Romam Empire* er-

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[9] Eric Voegelin, Political Theory and the Pattern of General History, in: *The American Political Science Review,* Vol. XXXVIII, August 1944, No. 4, S. 746-754 (S. 754).

halten, auf dessen 54. Kapitel und die dort skizzierte Genealogie der Sektenbewegungen Voegelin sich ausdrücklich bezieht. Mit Gibbons dürfte sich Voegelin in Zusammenhang mit dem Kapitel „From Alexander to Actium" der *History* beschäftigt haben, das wahrscheinlich im Laufe des Jahres 1940 geschrieben wurde.

Dass diese erste Studie Voegelins zum „Volk Gottes" bis heute unveröffentlicht blieb, hat gute Gründe. Es lag zunächst einmal daran, dass weder Strauss noch Gurian sie veröffentlichten und dass sich Voegelin, soweit bekannt, später um keinen Vorabdruck mehr bemühte. Dafür gibt es eine plausible Erklärung: Als Voegelin in der zweiten Hälfte der 40er Jahre mit einer umfassenden Neubearbeitung jener Teile der *History* begann, die sich mit der westlichen Moderne beschäftigten, befand sich darunter auch der Abschnitt „People of God". Das geschah, wie seine Korrespondenz mit Engel-Janosi zeigt, 1948. Jedenfalls bezieht sich Engel-Janosi in Briefen vom 1. Mai 1948 und vom 24. August 1948 auf eine nun offenbar fertiggestellte Fassung dieses Kapitels.[10] Mit dem Vorliegen dieser ausgereiften Fassung, auf die Voegelin im übrigen später in teilweise wörtlicher Form in der *New Science of Politics* zurückgriff, war für ihn die frühere Fassung bedeutungslos geworden. Wenn sie dennoch im Rahmen der *Occasional Papers* veröffentlicht wird, so hat dies vor allem den Grund, dass der Vergleich der beiden Fassungen interessante Einblicke in die Entwicklung der *History of Poli-*

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[10] Diese zweite Fassung wurde erstmals 1994 in deutscher Übersetzung veröffentlicht: Eric Voegelin, *Das Volk Gottes. Sektenbewegungen und der Geist der Moderne*, aus dem Engl. von Heike Kaltschmidt, hrsg., eingel. und mit einem Essay von Peter J. Opitz, München: Fink 1994. Eine Veröffentlichung des englischen Originals erfolgte nur wenige Jahre später im Rahmen der: *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, Vol. 22: *History of Political Ideas*, Vol. IV: *Renaissance and Reformation*, ed. with an Introduction by David L. Morse and William M. Thompson, Columbia and London: University of Missouri Press 1998, S. 131-214.

tical Ideas und insbesondere der Entwicklung der Vorstellungen Voegelins über die westliche Moderne liefert.

Während ein detaillierter Vergleich der beiden Versionen an dieser Stelle nicht möglich ist, sei doch wenigstens kurz auf einige interessante Punkte hingewiesen. So zeigt schon ein flüchtiger Blick auf die beiden Fassungen, dass die Fassung, von 1941, die in der Manuskript-Paginierung von den Seiten 33 bist 74 reicht und an den Abschnitt über Machiavelli anschließt, mit dem Voegelin – auf der Ebene der „rationalen Systeme" – die Darstellung der westlichen Moderne einleitete, erheblich kürzer ist als die Fassung von 1948.[11] Diese umfasst im Original 120 Seiten; dabei ist der größere Umfang sowohl die Folge einer Reihe von Einschüben in die vorliegende erste Fassung, die wesentlich zu deren analytischer Vertiefung beitragen, wie auch neuer Materialien, die insbesondere in zwei längeren Schlusskapiteln – „Der freie Geist" und „Das Apollinische Imperium" – ausgebreitet werden und die Chronologie der Darstellung bis in die Renaissance hinein verlängern. Zu erwähnen ist in diesem Zusammenhang auch, dass die Fassung von 1948 nicht mehr wie die von 1941 an den Abschnitt über Machiavelli anschließt, sondern von diesem nun durch einen Abschnitt mit dem Titel „The Order of Reason: Erasmus and More" getrennt ist, in dem die Ebene der „rationalen Ideensysteme" weitergeführt und ergänzt wird.

Ein zweiter wichtiger Punkt betrifft eine verstärkte methodische Reflexion. Schon in den *Politischen Religionen* hatte Voegelin auf die „Kontinuität der Formensprache"[12] aufmerksam gemacht, die sich von der Spekulation Joachim von Fiores

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[11] Siehe dazu die Gliederung, die einem Brief Voegelins an Alfred Schütz vom 21. Februar 1942 beilag, in: Peter J. Opitz, Zwischen Evokation und Kontemplation, in: *Occasional Papers,* XI, München: Eric-Voegelin-Archiv ²2002, S. 94ff.

[12] Eric Voegelin, *Die Politischen Religionen*, S. 51.

bis in die Gegenwart verfolgen lässt. Während er diese „Kontinuität“ dort aber nicht näher begründete, sondern es beim Augenschein einer gewissen Plausibilität beließ, ist er sich nun in der Darstellung des „Volk Gottes“ offenbar bewusst, dass er die methodischen Probleme, die dabei impliziert sind, nicht länger vernachlässigen kann. So weist er schon nach wenigen Sätzen darauf hin, dass es zweifelhaft sei, ob man im strikten Sinne des Wortes überhaupt von einer Geschichte der Bewegungen reden könne. Während es evident sei, dass diese in ihrer allgemeinen Struktur über die Jahrhunderte miteinander verbunden sind, „we are faced by the methodological question, whether their sequence in similar forms is due to historical continuity between them, or whether they spring up every time anew without being determined by proceding similar phenomena; this question is, as we shall see, open and in need of clarification.“[13]

Da Voegelin aber schon bevor er die methodologische Frage formuliert, darauf aufmerksam gemacht hatte, dass es sich bei diesen Bewegungen im strikten Sinne um "mystische Bewegungen in der Seele" einzelner Individuen und ihrer Anhänger handelt, deutete sich schon hier an, dass er für die zweite Alternative optieren würde. Und in der Tat weist er bei der Behandlung der orientalischen Einflüsse auf die mittelalterlichen Sektenbewegung, bei der er auf jene „oben erwähnte methodologische Frage“ zurückkommt, darauf hin, dass das Problem nicht der Einfluss östlicher Theologie sei, sondern das Auftauchen im Westen von „religious experiences which form in the East the basis of theological systems. The experiences themselves are neither Eastern nor Western, but simply human and can spring up anywhere at any time, though they will

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[13] Eric Voegelin, *The People of God*, 1941, S. 7.

neither become socially effective nor penetrate into the sphere of rationalized theology unless the institutional environment favors such expansion."[14] Voegelin bestreitet damit zwar nicht die Existenz solcher Einflüsse, ja er verweist mit Dionysius Areopagita sogar auf eine ihrer wichtigsten Quellen, billigt ihnen aber gegenüber den "religiösen Erfahrungen", die die Anhänger jener Bewegungen "bewegen", eine geringere Bedeutung zu. „The correct answer to the question seems to be that a type of religious experience which cannot find proper expression in the symbols of established evocations […] will seize upon Eastern expressions of a similar religiousness in order to make itself articulate."[15] Daraus folge, dass jene "Kontinuität" weniger auf der Ebene theologischer Symbole und dogmatischer Systeme zu suchen sei, als auf der der "Bewegungen der Seele", die sich mangels geeigneter Ausdrucksweisen im Westen auch östlicher Symbole bedienen können. Für die Analyse der diversen Sektenbewegungen ergibt sich daraus wiederum, dass es weniger darauf ankommt, sich auf die dogmatischen Unterschiede zwischen ihnen zu konzentrieren, als auf „their function as expressions of a common structure of sentiment."[16]

Dasselbe Problem stellte sich in verschärfter Form in der erweiterten Fassung von „The People of God", in der Voegelin einige Jahre später die Geschichte der Bewegungen und des neuen Denkens bis zur Renaissance weiterverfolgte. Bezeichnenderweise warf er auch schon gleich im ersten Satz des neuen Teils das Problem der „Kontinuität" auf: „Eine der sicher schwierigsten Fragen in der Geschichte der Bewegung

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[14] Ebd., S. 23.

[15] Ebd.

[16] Ebd., S. 24.

ist das Problem der Kontinuität."[17] Dass eine solche Kontinui-
tät bestand, stand für Voegelin auch weiterhin außer Frage –
„An der Kontinuität kann kein Zweifel bestehen; die Spekula-
tion über das Dritte Reich im 18. und 19. Jahrhundert zeigt die
gleiche formale Struktur, wie die im hohen Mittelalter"[18].
Angesichts des unterschwelligen Charakters der Bewegungen,
sowie der lückenhaften literarischen Überlieferung, bestand
das Problem vor allem darin, diese Kontinuität in Form von
direkten Einflüssen zweifelsfrei nachzuweisen. Ein solcher
Nachweis ist besonders schwierig beim Übergang von den
christlichen Sektenbewegungen des Hochmittelalters zu der
säkularistischen Spekulation des Humanismus und der Aufklä-
rung, da es sich hier um einen Wechsel in ein unterschiedli-
ches geistiges und gesellschaftliches Milieu handelt. „Wann
und wie wurde der intellektuell zweitrangige sektiererische
Typus der Spekulation „angesehen" und drang in die intellek-
tuelle Oberschicht des westlichen Denkens ein? [...] Wann und
wo ereignete sich die Verschmelzung der Spekulation der ak-
tivistischen Mystik mit dem Medium des innerweltlichen <In-
tellektualismus> und der <Wissenschaft>?"[19] 1941, als
Voegelin erstmals auf die Sektenbewegungen stieß, hatte er
sich damit begnügt, ihre Ideenwelt als eine unterschwellige
Ebene im politischen Denken des Westens zu identifizieren
und lediglich die geistige Kontinuität zwischen einzelnen Be-
wegungen nachzuweisen. Das war, da er die Darstellung nur
bis zu den puritanischen Bewegungen im 17.Jahrhundert
führte, noch vergleichsweise einfach. In der Fassung von 1948
stellte sich nun die erheblich schwierigere Aufgabe, zum einen

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[17] Eric Voegelin, *Das Volk Gottes*, S.78.

[18] Ebd., S. 107

[19] Ebd., S. 108

diese Entwicklungslinie zeitlich weiter fortzuführen und zum anderen das Eindringen dieses Erfahrungstypus in die Hauptlinie des westlichen Denkens seit dem Humanismus und der Renaissance näher zu bestimmen. Dieser zweite Aspekt wird noch dadurch kompliziert, dass der Nachweis des Weiterbestehens – einer „essentiellen Kontinuität" wie er es nennt – der Spekulationsform der christlichen Sektenbewegungen des Mittelalters in der Aufklärung Folgen sowohl für die Einschätzung der Renaissance als eines neuen Zeitalters, wie auch für die traditionelle Periodisierung der westlichen Geschichte haben würde.

Zumindest hinsichtlich der Einschätzung der Renaissance ist sich Voegelin dieser Folgen durchaus bewusst: „Die Antwort impliziert, dass unsere traditionelle Konzeption der Renaissance als eines neuen Zeitalters, das sich in seinem zivilisatorischen Inhalt und seiner Auffassung vollständig vom Mittelalter unterscheidet, aufgegeben werden muss. Es handelt sich weniger darum, das Datum der Renaissance weiter zurückzuschieben, […] es geht vielmehr darum, die substantielle Kontinuität zwischen dem christlichen Spiritualismus des hohen Mittelalters und dem neuen Reich der humanistischen, poetischen, künstlerischen und wissenschaftlichen Leistungen nachzuvollziehen, die wir als Renaissance identifizieren."[20] Was den zweiten Punkt anbelangt, die Periodisierung der westlichen Geschichte, so wird Voegelin die Konsequenzen seiner These von der „substantiellen Kontinuität" zwischen christlichen Spiritualismus und aufklärerischen Immanentismus erst Anfang 1951 in den Walgreen Lectures ziehen. In ihnen verwendet er den Begriff der „Moderne" nicht mehr in konventionellem Sinne zur Bezeichnung einer zeitli-

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[20] Ebd., S. 108 f.

chen Epoche, die auf das Mittelalter folgt, sondern ähnlich wie im „Volk Gottes" als Signatur einer neuen Haltung zur Realität, die sich schon im 10.Jahrhundert allmählich aufzubauen begann und nach einem kontinuierlichen Aufstieg schließlich im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert die westlichen Ordnungstraditionen der klassischen Philosophie und des Christentums zunehmend in die Defensive drängte. An die Stelle einer starren und fixierten Periodisierung der westlichen Geschichte in Altertum, Mittelalter, Neuzeit tritt damit eine Sichtweise, die sich stärker an unterschiedlichen Ordnungserfahrungen und den ihnen entsprechenden Symbolen orientiert[21], und es ist diese Sichtweise, die schließlich der ursprünglichen Konzeption von *Order and History*, das aus der *History of Political Ideas* herauswächst, zugrunde liegen wird.

Spätestens bei der Abfassung der Walgreen Lectures verfügte Voegelin auch hinsichtlich zweier weiterer Problemkomplexe über mehr Klarheit, als bei den beiden Fassungen von „The People of God". Der eine Problemkomplex betrifft die Bezeichnung jenes spezifischen Erfahrungstypus, der dem „modernen" Denken zugrunde liegt. Voegelin verwendet für ihn nun den Begriff „gnostisch". Während der Begriff „Gnosis" in der Version von 1941 nur einmal auftaucht – und hier mit deutlichem Bezug auf die sogenannte alte Gnosis – häuft sich seine Verwendung in der Version von 1948, und zwar insbesondere in den beiden neu hinzugekommenen Kapiteln.[22] Interessanterweise ist der Gnosis-Begriff aber auch jetzt noch

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[21] Siehe dazu Thomas Hollweck, Wie legitim ist die Moderne? Gedanken zu Eric Voegelins Begriff der Moderne und Hans Blumenbergs Begriff der Neuzeit, *Occasional Papers,* XXXII, München: Eric-Voegelin-Archiv, Januar 2003.

[22] Siehe dazu Eric Voegelin, *Das Volk Gottes*, S.46, 79, 83, 88f, 93, 98f, 103, 106, 114.

nicht die Generalkategorie, unter der das „moderne" Welt- und Ordnungsverständnis subsumiert wird. Zu einer solchen wird er erst in den Walgreen Lectures. Die wahrscheinliche Erklärung dafür dürfte sein, dass Voegelin sich 1948 mit Urs von Balthasars *Prometheus* beschäftigt hatte, und durch diesen, wie er sich später in seinen *Autobiographischen Reflexionen* erinnerte, „auf die Probleme des Gnostizismus und die Anwendung dieser Symbolform auf moderne ideologische Phänomene zum ersten Mal aufmerksam" wurde.[23] Die Hinweise auf von Balthasar häufen sich Ende der 40er Jahre in den Korrespondenzen Voegelins, und von Balthasar gehört schließlich auch zu jenen Gelehrten, denen er im Herbst 1950 auf seiner Europareise einen Besuch abstattet. Auf dieser Reise erhielt er, wie er Robert Heilman schrieb, nun auch weitere Informationen über „Probleme der Gnosis".[24]

Der zweite Problemkomplex betrifft den Begriff der „Erfahrung", insbesondere der religiösen Erfahrung. Anders als der Gnosis-Begriff ist der Erfahrungs-Begriff schon deutlich in der „The People of God"-Version von 1941 vorhanden. Er wird hier insbesondere im Abschnitt „The Structure of Sentiment of the Movement" verwendet und dient, wie sich zeigte, dort dazu, die geistige Kontinuität der Bewegung zu begründen, wobei als zentrale Grunderfahrung die der Welt als Schauplatz des Kampfes zwischen den Kräften des Lichts und denen der Dunkelheit ausgewiesen wird.[25] Dieser Erfahrungsbegriff hat

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[23] Eric Voegelin, *Autobiographische Reflexionen*, hrsg., eingeleitet und mit einer Bibliographie von Peter J. Opitz, München: Fink 1994. S.85, zu den Einzelheiten siehe Giuliana Parotto, Zum Einfluss von Urs von Balthasar auf Eric Voegelin, *Occasional Papers,* XXVIII, München: Eric-Voegelin-Archiv, März 2002.

[24] Brief vom 1.Dezember 1950 von Eric Voegelin an Robert Heilman.

[25] Eric Voegelin, *The People of God*, 1941, S. 26 f.

in der Fassung von 1948 sowohl an Bedeutung, wie auch an Komplexität gewonnen. Letztere zeigt sich insbesondere in den Reflexionen über die Aktivierung von Eriugenas Symbolismus des neuen Reiches in der Predigt von Thomas Collier. Während der wahre Mystiker – hier Eriugena – das sinnhafte Bild von der Vollkommenheit dieses Reiches auflöst und versucht, „zu der Erfahrung vorzudringen, die das Symbol hervorgebracht hat", dabei aber „die Unterscheidung und die Distanz zwischen Erfahrung und Symbol wahrt", hebt der aktivistische Mystiker – hier Collier – „die Distanz zwischen Symbol und Erfahrung auf und missversteht das Symbol als eine Erfahrung, die existentiell im Leben des Menschen in Gesellschaft verwirklicht werden kann."[26] Wir stehen hier schon mitten in der Erfahrungsproblematik, die das methodische und theoretische Fundament der Walgreen Lectures bildet und in den folgenden Jahren den neuen Ansatz einer Philosophie von Politik und Geschichte begründen wird, den Voegelin dort erstmals skizziert. Die zentrale Aussage wird dabei lauten, dass „die Substanz der Geschichte in den Erfahrungen besteht, durch die der Mensch das Verständnis seiner Menschlichkeit und gleichzeitig das Verständnis seiner Grenzen gewinnt."[27] Doch zwischen dieser Aussage und der ersten Fassung von „The People of God" liegt ein volles Jahrzehnt.

Zusammenfassend lässt sich somit feststellen: Während die 1941er Version von „The People of God" isoliert und für sich betrachtet nur von begrenztem Interesse ist, wird sie im größeren Kontext der Entwicklung der Voegelinschen Philosophie zu einem interessanten Zwischenschritt. Denn im gewissen

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[26] Eric Voegelin, *Das Volk Gottes*, S. 64 f.

[27] Eric Voegelin, *Die neue Wissenschaft der Politik. Eine Einführung*, Freiburg-München, 1991, S. 119.

Sinne bildet diese frühe Version die Keimzelle wie auch den Ausgangspunkt für Voegelins Sicht und Deutung der westlichen „Moderne", und diese ist wiederum ein zentrales Element seiner politischen Philosophie.

Peter J. Opitz

Wolfratshausen, März 2003

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