

OCCASIONAL PAPERS

ERIC-VOEGELIN-ARCHIV
LUDWIG-MAXIMILIANS-UNIVERSITÄT
MÜNCHEN

— XLIII —

Eric Voegelin

The Beyond and Its Parousia



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Jüngste Veröffentlichungen: „Max Scheler and Eric Voegelin on the Eternal in Man“ in: Stephen Schneck, ed., *Max Scheler's Acting Persons*, Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2002; Herausgeberschaft mit Gilbert Weiss: Eric Voegelin, *The Theory of Governance and Other Miscellaneous Papers 1921-1938, The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, Vol. 32, Columbia: The University of Missouri Press, 2003; *The Drama of Humanity and other Miscellaneous Papers, 1939-1985, The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, Vol. 33, Columbia: The University of Missouri Press, 2004.

OCCASIONAL PAPERS, XLII, Mai 2004

William Petropulos,
Eric Voegelin, *The Beyond and Its Parousia*
Hrsg. und mit einem Nachwort von William Petropulos

OCCASIONAL PAPERS

Hrsg. von Peter J. Opitz und Dietmar Herz
in Verbindung mit dem Eric-Voegelin-Archiv an der Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität
München und dem Eric-Voegelin-Archiv e.V. München
Satz und Redaktion: Anna E. Frazier

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ISSN 1430-6786

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ERIC VOEGELIN

THE BEYOND AND ITS PAROUSIA

I. Preliminaries

As title for today's lecture in the context of „The Meaning of History“, I have chosen, „The Beyond and its Parousia.“ You know, of course, where the terms come from, Plato's *Republic* (508-509). „Beyond“ – the Greek term is *epekeina* – is Plato's general symbolism for the divine reality, that is, the one beyond all the reality of the gods of the cosmos. He says this of the divine reality, which he covers by the term *epekeina*, „beyond the others,“ that it is present in the reality of the world, including the reality of man. That is the *parousia*. And this *parousia* is present, is formative, in the direction of order and justice. So *parousia* is the general term for the presence of divine reality in all reality. Here already, as you see, there are complications with the term „reality“, because on the one hand, there is a divine reality, on the other hand, the divine reality is the reality that is present in all reality. I will come presently to this problem.

This conception of the *epekeina* and its *parousia* in reality implies that there is something that has to be formed. There seems to be a counter-pole to the *epekeina* that resists formation or requires formation, and, if formed, can still resist the formation and deform the formation into some deformed type of entity. So we have in the process of reality a very complicated series of events filled with the tension of formation, resistance to the formation, resistance to the deformation of formation, and so on; so that is why I gave the general title to this essay.

But I do not want to indulge in Platonic problems. I want to talk about the problems which occupy us in philosophy today. This lecture is supposed to be part of a seminar on „The Meaning of History,“ so let me talk about the problem of history and the presence of the *epekeina* in the reality of history, and what the meaning of history is.

What is the meaning of history? Of course [we cannot talk about the meaning of history¹]. Today, we are in a situation in which, parallel with the advances in the natural sciences, we have enormous advances in the historical sciences. However, these enormous advances in the historical sciences can sometimes be more confusing than enlightening. There is [such a] quantity of information and so little theoretical penetration of [it] that we are perhaps more disturbed by the flood of knowledge than we are illuminated by [it]. So let me refer to the present state of the question.

The term „History,“ as it is used, for instance, in the title of this seminar, „The Meaning of History,“ is not very old. It goes back to the 18th century. We have a survey of the problems about its origin in an essay by Reinhart Koselleck, „Die Herausbildung des modernen Geschichtsbegriffs“ [„The Development of the Modern Concept of History“].² There he gives the sources where the „collective singular“, (as he calls it) „History“, appears for the first time. That is, up to the 18th century, histories were always histories of something, but all of a sudden in the 18th century the term „History“ appears (in German *Geschichte*) as a collective singular referring to the whole of history as if it were a [„thing”,] something. This peculiar new formulation, „meaning of history,“ is the basis of all subsequent thought about the meaning of history. That is the

¹ Text passages in brackets [] have been added by the editor.

² Otto Brunner (Hrsg.), *Geschichtliche Grundbegriffe*, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1975.

whole matter – the reflective consciousness of history is not older than 250 years.

Now how [do we] deal with it? On the occasion of the appearance of that reflective consciousness of history, „History“ as a collective singular (of which we don't yet know what it really means), arose, at the same time [and dealing with the same problems,] the symbolism of „consciousness.“ This „consciousness“ has a peculiar structure. Let me briefly explain what the present state of that problem is. (I have dealt with it, for instance, in the essay, „Wisdom and the Magic of the Extreme“.)³

It is the problem that we have, on the one hand, [of] the consciousness, located in our body, of things [...] outside our body. We call that something that has the consciousness, our „self,“ the „subject“ of consciousness, and the other, the reality of which we are conscious, an „object.“ Graphically, one could draw on the blackboard a subject referring to an object in the external world. I call this the intentional structure of consciousness, in agreement with Husserl's use of the term, „intentional consciousness“. [It designates] the subject directed to an object. In this connection, in this language of a subject referring to an object, the object is the reality, Reality #1⁴, which we speak of as „reality“, [as] that of which we are conscious.

But then, on the other hand, we have the further problem that the subject is also real. What then is the reality of the subject, what kind of reality does it have? We have to introduce a second concept of

³ Eric Voegelin, *Wisdom and the Magic of the Extreme*, in: *Eranos Yearbook* 46. Republished in: *The Southern Review*, n.s. XVII (1983), 235-87. Now in: Eric Voegelin, *Published Essays: 1966-1985, The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, Vol. 12, ed. with an Introduction by Ellis Sandoz, Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1990, 315-376.

⁴ Here, and elsewhere in the text, Voegelin is obviously pointing to a diagram that he has drawn on a chalk board.

reality, which embraces the cognitive act of the intentionalist type as a further reality, one in which the subject-object relation is an event. [Thus], we have the following problem: Here, Reality #1, which is an object of a subject; and over here another reality which is a subject of which, you might say, the event is [the] predicate – obviously inconsistent terminology.

Now my thesis is that this inconsistency on the linguistic level cannot be dissolved. I speak of this structure of Reality in consciousness which I have just outlined, [...] as the „*thing-reality*“ (Reality #1) and the „*It-reality*“, the other reality comprising the whole event. (I call this latter an „It“ because I became aware of it [for] the first time in the studies of Karl Kraus on the „it“ in language. We have an „it“ in ordinary language, to which we sometimes refer [...] when we say, „It rains,“ – an event surrounded by a reality of which the rain then is a predicate.)

So we have a structure in which „*thing-reality*“ and „*It-reality*“ cannot be separated as entities but are together in the one structure of consciousness which structure I call the „Paradox of Consciousness.“ This understanding of structure reaches from consciousness and reality into language itself and cannot be dissolved in language. [Thus] there is no point in getting excited about ambiguities and equivocations of language because that is the structure of language, which is part of the same reality in which we have consciousness of reality.

But we talk about all these things. That shows a further structure in consciousness: we can reflectively distance ourselves from the paradox in which we are involved and talk about it – and [that is what we call] „Philosophy“. I call this structure of consciousness, „Reflective Distance.“ All philosophy is conducted in reflective distance within consciousness about consciousness.

We always have three levels of language which are in conflict with [one another]: the thing-reality language, the It-reality language, and the reflective distance language. That is of course in flat contradiction to contemporary linguistic conceptions of language as a system of signs referring to things, because the structure of language is, as you see, very complicated and determined by the paradox and the reflective distance to the paradox.

Let me give you some examples of how that works in practice. If you analyze a Platonic dialogue like the *Timaeus* you will find that Plato speaks of a divine paradigm of reality, created by a demiurge, which is then applied to the world of becoming, the thing-reality. So you have an opposition, an experienced tension between two poles, the one called „intelligible being,“ and the other called the „becoming,“ the *genesis* – that is being: *to-on*, and becoming: *genesis*. But then when you analyze the matter in reflective distance as Plato does, when you talk about these things, you must admit that the *genesis*, which is not *being* is, after all, *being* too. So we have to introduce a further terminology. Both are *genes* (kinds) of being: Plato calls them *ousias eidos*, two kinds of being. So you have here another conflict: the *being* which is never *genesis*, and *genesis* which is never real *being* – and both are „beings“ nevertheless, kinds of being. So he has the further problem: he must somehow get these two kinds of being together in reality, not only in his thought. He therefore introduces a third kind of being, the *psyche*, which participates in both the *being* that is never *genesis*, and the becoming, the *genesis* that is never *being*, and which can, therefore, transfer the order of *being* into the *becoming* by its position in between the two (in-between is the *en meso*). And that is now a third kind of being. But what is that third kind of being? In *Timaeus* Plato explains that it is a composite of Being; of the Same, of the Other. There you have again the term Being appearing in a further reflective analysis.

I am not giving you these examples in order to show how contradictory Plato is in his language, but in order to show that the language which is contradictory on a [...] level oriented to a logic of external things is not applicable to the analysis of the consciousness problems which I am talking about here and to the reflective distance of consciousness. [The contradictions are] inherent in the language in which we speak at all times. This fact must therefore be realized in our analysis of historical facts, of historical concepts, of [questions such as] „what is history,“ [or] „what is the meaning [of history],“ and so on. I don't want to say more about that thorny problem now, because you will find more of it in the course of the examples which I have to give.

„History“ is one of those terms of the 18th century which arises where an attempt is made to fuse all these various problems of the structure of reality – they all belong together – into one reality which is called „History“. Since you are [within] that problem of history you can talk about it on a further level, which the German Idealists called „Speculation“. „Philosophy of Speculation“ is one of the terms which arises in the 18th century. Koselleck, in the article to which I have referred, brings attention to the fact that you have the same structure of the peculiar concentration of the whole problem of consciousness in other terms which appear at the same time, such as „Revolution“. There were revolutions before, but „Revolution“ as a collective singular which appears today in ideological language is a new invention of the 18th century.

There were „freedoms“ before: for instance, freedom from government interference, but the term „Freedom“ as an absolute about which one could talk – to make a Revolution in the name of Freedom – is a new invention of the 18th century. [At this time we get] a whole series of concepts which become a part of the daily political language in which all structures of consciousness are

submerged into one type of word, these collective singulars. So that is a new event about which we have to talk.

II. The Meaning of History

„History,“ in the sense which we have just explained, as the merger of all these structures into one term, is a „thing“ to be defined. We talk about „the meaning of history“ as if it were a thing of which we can say what the meaning is. The meaning of a thing is its nature, which can, perhaps, be formulated in a definition if you know enough about it. But we have a difficulty here, because history is practically all of reality, all of the things which happened in the past, that happen now, and that will happen in the indefinite future. Now while we do not know very much about the past, in spite of all the things we do know about it, we know nothing at all about the future. Therefore the *thing* „history“, which extends into the future, is not an object of which we [can speak of as though it were] a thing at all, as we talk of a chair or anything like that. In a strict sense „history“ has, as a famous Jesuit thinker, [Hans Urs von] Balthasar, once explained, no *eidos*⁵. In other words, it has no meaning, for the reason that history is not a thing about which we [can] know anything at all, because it is not a given, but is absorbed into all the structures which I have detailed here in a fragmentary manner⁶.

⁵ See Hans Urs von Balthasar, *Theologie der Geschichte*, Einsiedeln: Joannes Verlag, 1950.

⁶ Voegelin discusses the problem of an „*eidos* of history“ in *The New Science of Politics*, Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1952, 119f. See: Eric Voegelin, *Die Neue Wissenschaft der Politik*, hrsg. und mit einem Nachwort von Peter J. Opitz, München: Fink, 2004. For Voegelin's reception of the work of Hans Urs von Balthasar see Giuliana Parotto, *Zum Einfluß von Urs von Balthasar auf Eric Voegelin*, *Occasional Papers*, XXVIII, München: Eric Voegelin-Archiv, Feb. 2002.

So there *is* no meaning of history.

The problem is not new, of course. Let me give you a parallel problem of antiquity. You have the problem in Aristotle that he cannot define the form of a *polis*, of a state, because he tries to define the form of a state by its constitution. But, unfortunately, Athens at the time when he wrote changed its constitutions quite frequently in various revolutions, from democratic to oligarchic and back again, to tyrannies, and so on. Thus, every time the constitution, the *politeuma*, changed there would be a different entity[...], and thus the entity of the *polis*, Athens, would be lost in the various entities constituted by the sequence of constitutions. That may sound like an academic exercise, but it is a matter of practical importance even today because governments which come to power by a revolution are inclined to interpret their form of government as a new entity not responsible for what went on before; and what went on before are the debts incurred by the previous government which the new government now refuses to pay. Aristotle makes a special remark [to the effect] that the problem is not a consequence of a theory, though he doesn't know exactly why [it isn't]. (Another practical example might be the problem of a Communist government rejecting all the debts of the Czarist government because the Soviet Union is not identical with anything that went before. We still have today, as far as I know, negotiations between former owners (mostly French) of Czarist bonds and the Soviet government to get at least a partial repayment from that government which operates under the theory that it has a new form of reality and is not responsible for a previous entity with which it is not identical.)

From this first exercise in analyzing history as if it were a thing we arrive at the negative statement, which has to be put flatly: On the level of thing-reality (and there is no doubt about it) „history“ has no meaning. It is not a thing that can have a meaning. It is not a given.

However, this first result of analysis is in conflict with the empirical fact that everybody talks about the meaning of history as if there were such a thing. So, empirically, where does this problem of meaning come from, about which everybody speaks, although everyone who has ever analyzed the problem knows that there is no meaning of history? That is a problem which Karl Löwith studied a few decades ago and about which he wrote a volume, *Meaning in History*⁷, distinguishing between the meaning *of* history, about which, he also agreed, there isn't any, and meaningful events *within* history which have to be analyzed regarding their meaning. The theoretical advance in analysis by Löwith did not get very far, but Löwith has seen the problem: There *is* meaning in spite of the fact that there is *no* meaning. Now where does it come from?

Before I go into that – and that will be the last part of the lecture – let us see what one can do on the level of pretending that there *is* a meaning of history. There are possible solutions, possible answers. What constructions would permit us to talk about a meaning of history? I will give two types of solution, one indulged in by Marcus Aurelius, and the other, a modern one, culminating in Hegel. Then I shall turn to the Kantian criticism of these constructions.

The Marcus Aurelius conception is contained in his *Reflections*⁸ (Book XI, chapter 11). There he analyzes the problem that there is an intelligible structure of reality, which he calls the *logos*. The whole of the universe has a *logos*, which is intelligible, and of which the *psyche-logike*, the logical soul of man, is a part; its conversion to participation is very similar to the *parousia* in Plato. So man knows,

⁷ Karl Löwith, *Meaning in History*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949. Translated as: *Weltgeschichte und Heilsgeschehen*, Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1953.

⁸ The usual English title is *Meditations*.

by his *psyche-logike*, what the meaning of reality and the order of neighborly love and justice is.

Now as an emperor Marcus Aurelius has to deal every day with all sorts of people who apparently are not always inspired by the *psyche-logike* but by other interests, such as greed, ambition, status seeking, revolt and so on. The question is, to what extent can he realize the intended order of reality in a reality which contains resistant forces. That is the job of the emperor, sometimes difficult, sometimes impossible to the point of despair. But then comes the very interesting remark that there is always a way out if it really should become impossible; and that remark, influenced by the preceding analyses of his friend Epictetus, is *suicide*. We can commit suicide if it becomes impossible to realize the order understood by the *psyche-logike* in the reality that surrounds us.

So reality is fundamentally governed by the *logos*, but for reasons unknown to us, it also admits all sorts of things which apparently do not fit the *logos* that is intended. But Marcus Aurelius doesn't go very far in the analysis of these problems; he just states them. After all, the order of the cosmos is known to us, by walking around in space and time, in memory and expectations; we have a good knowledge of the structure intended in reality. We also have very good knowledge of our own *psyche-logike* through self-analysis, self-reflection, through memory, and through the consequences of our actions. The net result is that, as he says, a man of forty knows everything that has ever happened and ever will happen because it is always the same as what happened in the forty years that he has been alive. He knows what the *psyche-logike* is and what the resistances are to the penetration of the *psyche-logike* into reality.

So here is a conception of understanding the meaning of history as a constant available in knowledge of the psyche and in the knowledge of the resistance it will encounter within the lifetime of a man of

forty. The meaning of history is a common-sense experience of a man of forty. And that's that.

The suicidal solution reminds me of other possibilities of violent reaction. If the thing doesn't work you can either enforce the reality, if you are the emperor, or you can force it by violent revolution if you are not an emperor but on the receiving side of the affair. I want to stress that point because it was a general problem for any emperor. For instance, in Tacitus' life of his father-in-law Agricola, who was an imperial general, there is the story of his battles against some Germanic tribes which he wanted to dislocate but who didn't like being dislocated. There are two great speeches, the one of the Roman general who explains why the will of the Roman Empire must prevail, and then the reply of the Germanic chieftain culminating in the sentences, „If we do not have a place in which we can live, we always have a place where we can die.“ So again, suicide as the ultimate resistance in an historical situation is fundamental. Obviously, these stories also apply to situations we have today. So that is Tacitus: That is one solution. We know it anyway through the common-sense experience of a man of forty.

The matter is of course much more complicated. Therefore we turn now to the second solution, as we find it in the 18th and 19th centuries, parallel with the genesis of the term „history“ as a collective singular.

The problem is that we know in the course of history that we learn a lot from the past. All of a sudden we have histories of a Roman Empire, of a Holy Roman Empire, of a Germanic type, of various national histories, histories of France, and of Germany, histories of the Italian city-states, especially since the sixteenth century but beginning in the fifteenth century. And there is an accumulation of knowledge which became particularly impressive through the development of mathematics and physics in the fifteenth, sixteenth

and seventeenth centuries; and so we know so much more than was ever known in antiquity. The common-sense experience, even of an emperor like Marcus Aurelius, is not everything because a lot has happened since and we know more about the process of history and its reality than was ever known before.

That is the position of Comte and also of Hegel, who explicitly says that while history has a complicated structure, and while it is true that one cannot simply talk about history on the basis of limited knowledge because there is so much [we do not know], enough history [has taken place] by now [for us] to know its nature. Against the former argument, that the future is indefinite and history is not a thing, the idea is [that] due to the accumulated knowledge, it is now enough of a thing that we can talk about the meaning of history in principle; that is what Comte does and what Hegel does on the same principle – we now know enough about historical events to talk about the nature of history.

Now before I go into more of the details of this problem let me remind you that, while newly formulated in this manner around 1800, it does not begin then but goes back to a resistance movement in the 17th century, known as *La Querelle des anciens et modernes*⁹: The resistance of the contemporaries in the 17th century to the authority of a humanistic (in the Renaissance sense) authoritarianism which held that the authority of ancient authors would be the valid sort of knowledge against everything that would differ from it in the immediate experience of these contemporaries. The revolt against that attitude of domination by the authority of ancient authors over contemporary experience is formulated by Bacon in the *Novum*

⁹ For the history of this controversy, see Arbogast Schmitt „Querelle des Anciens et des Modernes”, in: Manfred Landfester (Hrsg.), *Der Neue Pauly. Enzyklopädie der Antike*, Bd. 15/2. Rezeptions- und Wissenschaftsgeschichte, Teil 3, Stuttgart und Weimar: Metzler Verlag, 2003, Sp. 607-622.

Organum (Aphorism 84) where he explains that knowledge has been accumulating since antiquity. You cannot rely on the author – meaning the authors of antiquity – as a source of knowledge, in the humanistic sense, because that would be to forget, that these authors themselves were once in revolt against the authors that preceded them and about whom we know very little. We wouldn't know what to do, he goes on, if we did not follow the example of the authors of antiquity who revolted against their „authors of antiquity.“ So the revolt must go on. And if one insists on the authority of authors, then one forgets that *Tempus*, as Bacon calls it, that „Time“ is the *auctor auctorum*, the author of authors. All are [involved in] the time-process, of authoritative pronouncements following each other and of an accumulation of knowledge extending into the present and going beyond the present. So that is the revolt in formulation.

But there are difficulties in this revolt. If you take the parallel formulations of Pascal, for instance, about twenty years later (the *Novum Organum* was written in 1620), you will find him explaining the same problem as Bacon in his *Préface pour le traité du vide* (1642) (the Treatise on the Void was never written, but the „Préface“ is preserved as a fragment). There is this accumulation of knowledge. But then he goes a bit further than Bacon in his symbolism and metaphor by saying that as far as this accumulation of knowledge is concerned, the ancients are the young ones, and we are in the „old age“ of mankind: We have the experience of that old age now through history and it is a superior knowledge to that of the inexperienced youthful knowledge peculiar to the so-called ancients. In this process, you might say, mankind as a whole is like a man gathering experience from youth to age. You think he will know a lot of things he didn't know when he was a young man¹⁰

¹⁰ [Voegelin's marginal notes signified his intention to include the following passage as a footnote.]: „The one-man conception of mankind emerges here. Please be aware of that problem, the one-man conception of mankind,

In this context Pascal runs into difficulties because he is a good Christian. He must exempt the content of the Scripture from the improvement of knowledge concerning reality. Scripture is an exception. He says we do not know more [now] about the supra-rational reality than is given in the Scriptures. In this respect there is no accumulation of knowledge. The accumulation of knowledge is confined to the areas of physics, mathematics, and philosophy. He includes philosophy here but exempts Scripture.

There you had, of course, problems contemporary with Pascal, such as the fact that Scripture, in the dogmatic formulations resulting from it, was in conflict with certain empirical statements about the time of history and events in history, and so on. [These issues] still plagued Hegel. Hegel was already under pressure not to talk too much about China which was very much older than had been assumed, because he would then run into the difficulty of [having to] contradict Bishop Usher's date of 4004 B.C. for the creation of the World. That was only one hundred and fifty years ago, one still had to be careful that statements in one's published works did not conflict with Scripture.

So that was Pascal's position in this respect. But it indicates that there is a problem: while there is an increase in knowledge there also seems to be some constancy of knowledge, represented, for instance, by the truth of Scripture. [...] ¹¹ Pascal recognizes that there are areas

because that is a contributing factor in the 18th & 19th century in talking about mankind at all in spite of the fact that empirically such a thing as mankind does not exist. There is no such thing ... not in any given time, achieved through „history.“ You would have to go back from mankind into the biological evolution preceding mankind, and to the material evolution preceding the biological. There you have a concept of history now actually at work in science. We have a „history“ of matter, a „history“ of life, a „history“ of man, and so on, in succession, and there is no „mankind“, but history becomes something entirely different: a name for the process of reality in time, which is not at its end but goes on still“.

¹¹ There is a break in the text here.

which do not simply improve but which are constants in reality and the exploration [of reality].

Now, what do we make of this situation? First, an historical comment – which I should have added more appropriately at the end of the Marcus Aurelius remarks. When Marcus Aurelius said that a man of forty knows everything that has been and is and will be, he takes up a classic formulation that is a line from Homer and Hesiod, where reality is identified as the *ta eonta*, the being-things that are, that have been, and that will be. That is a classic formulation of reality comprehending everything, including the gods, which has remained a constant through the centuries and, for instance, was still used by Hegel. And this Whole is obviously something in progress, but also something that has constant [elements], as we have just seen in the exemption extended to Scripture by Pascal.

That was also a problem confronting Kant. Let me talk about the Kantian criticism of the situation. This is the problem of the 18th century. 18th century thinkers such as Kant and Schiller, his younger contemporary, had a much better understanding of the situation than the next generation and ourselves (we follow the next generation and not Kant and Schiller) because the deformation of thought to which I referred in the collective singulars and the misconstructions of the structure of consciousness have by now been established with public effectiveness, [whereas before 1800 they had not yet become so publicly effective,] and therefore were more open to discussion.

In his essay of 1784, *Ideen zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht*¹², Kant makes the following remarks. History is conceived as progress toward a rational order. Not very

¹² Immanuel Kant, *Ideen zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht*, in: Immanuel Kant, *Werke in Sechs Bänden*, hrsg. von Wilhelm Weischedel, Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1983, Bd. IV, 33-53.

different in principle from the conception of Marcus Aurelius, only in the meantime understanding has grown that the meaning of rational order is better understood today than it was two thousand years ago, and there is an accumulation of knowledge concerning [the nature of] rational order. This rational order of Enlightenment is to be achieved in time, either right away through a revolution or in the not-too-distant future through non-revolutionary action that would change the structure of society and introduce an „Order of Reason“. What has entered here is that revolt against antiquity which we saw on the occasion of Bacon and Pascal: there is an accumulation of knowledge and we now have a lot of knowledge about history. What then is the meaning of all those people in the past who for thousands of years contributed to our understanding of knowledge up to the point where we can now make a revolution in the name of reason but who themselves will never profit from the revolution and the order which we are about to establish? This idea, concentrated in the symbolism of previous ages making contributions to the present, which is part of the idea of „Progress“, is now exposed by Kant in its immorality. Supposedly everybody has to make a contribution to a „State of Reason“ to be established by certain middle-class intellectuals around 1800 ... and all [previous] history is nothing but a contribution to this noble [end]. He immediately recognized in [this notion] the problem that these speculators want to make [an end] of this order – the permanent struggle of the *parousia* in the formation of reality through the Beyond by getting a final formation of which they themselves are the carriers. He saw the libidinous problem in such a construction: I myself am the fulfiller of history – as you find, for instance, formulated in the Introduction to the *Logic* of Hegel where he says: „This Logic contains the Reason of God, the process of divine dialectic, unveiled in perfection.“ Hegel is now the Logos of God, no longer Christ, who was only a forerunner who didn't know all about

the Logos yet. The *Logic* of Hegel replaces the Gospel of John as the information about what the Logos of real divinity is¹³.

Kant exposed this libidinous excess, that had already become visible in general literature at the time when he wrote, as the attempt to become immortal in time, which leaves out the fact that after all man has to die and that the perfection of life is in death, not in life itself (the problem that worried Pascal when he exempted Scripture from the „advances“).

If you dissolve all talk about reality into a mere contribution and accumulation of knowledge [in time], you suppress [the notion] of the perfection [that is found] in the transition from life to death [and] you never get beyond the existential reality that all men who are alive have to die. In this respect, we are still with Heraclitus in the oracular formulation:

Immortals mortals
mortals immortals
live the others' death
the others' life die.¹⁴

This problem of Life and Death is a constant that cannot be [dismissed by claiming] that the perfect life has now arrived within this world. That insight casts a very interesting light on the various problems in the meaning of History. If you identify the meaning of history with the Hegelian-Comtean sense [of the term] (criticized by Kant before it was even formulated) it means: When you expand your life to the point where it includes a fruition of reality that is

¹³ For Voegelin's Hegel-interpretation see Eric Voegelin, *Hegel – Eine Studie über Zauberei*. Aus dem Englischen von Nils Winkler und mit einem Nachwort von Peter J. Opitz, *Occasional Papers*, IX, 2. überarb. Aufl., München: Eric-Voegelin-Archiv, 2001.

¹⁴ For Voegelin's interpretation of Heraclitus, see Eric Voegelin, *Die Welt der Polis: Vom Mythos zur Philosophie*, hrsg. von Jürgen Gebhardt, *Ordnung und Geschichte*, Bd. V, hrsg. von Peter J. Opitz und Dietmar Herz, München: Fink, 2003, 81-105.

only due after death, then you have killed your life. Your life is dead, if you assume that the eternal life can be [achieved] in this life which ends in death. The „Meaning of History,“ therefore, re-formulated in such terms, means the death of history. If everybody believes that perfection has come, history has come to its end and is dead. The search for the meaning of history under the category of an entity which has a meaning [that] can be and is discovered actively in the present in order to realize the perfect order means the death of man and society.

The life in tension is lost, if the tension is abolished by the belief that the meaning of history is now. That is a very important point because when you get into the varieties of historical constructions realizing one or the other variety of the perfect understanding of history, every one of them has to fight every other [one] to the death because there can be only one true reality. If you have half a dozen „true realities“ of which every one has to be realized at all costs, obviously they all have to kill each other. This is a very different situation from that of antiquity where polytheism was tolerant in the sense that the gods of the other nations were recognized as parts in the *parousia* of divine reality and therefore as [constituting] a difference which did not exclude each nation from humanity. One could be stronger than the others, but in principle they were all on the same level, while today the same level on principle is excluded by the assumption of the perfect knowledge of a meaning of history in the constructivist sense.

III. The Emergence of Meaning in History.

Now, how do we get out of that misery? We get out of that misery again through history. We have an enormous knowledge of history today and we know how meanings in history emerge. I have given you just one example, that of the „meaning of history“ of the 18th

century which is now running itself into its death. But we can state empirically a number of cases where history emerges in definite forms.

One such definite form discernible in the material is the configuration of spiritual movements, imperial expansion, and historiography – not one or the other but only as a configuration of the three.¹⁵

We have the following cases.

When you have the Mosaic spiritual outbreak, the spiritual movement, reaching into the Solomonic-Davidic empires, and then the conflict between the necessities of an empire construction (with violence and so on) and the idea of an order under God, you get for the first time an historiographic work describing the genesis of empire and its problems, the David Memoir [II Samuel, 9:20 – I Kings, 1-2]. It is the earliest historiographic tract.

The David Memoir is the first historiographic work in which the conflict between a spiritual insight preceding the imperial expansion and the details and necessities of an imperial expansion is the reason why the facts in history become interesting. The conflict between spiritual order and imperial expansive movements is the subject matter that requires detailed description. The conflict, the tension, is the problem.

And of such cases, now, we have three: the one here in the David Memoir, another one later, in China, after the establishment of the Ch'in Dynasty in the historiography of Ssu-ma Ch'ien (145—86 B.C.) and his father Ssu-ma T'an, where you get first, spiritual

¹⁵ See Eric Voegelin, „Configurations of History”, in: Paul Kuntz (ed.), *Concept of Order*, Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1968, 23-42. Reprinted in: Eric Voegelin, *Published Essays 1966-1985*, Vol. 12, *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, ed. with an Introduction by Ellis Sandoz, Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1990, 95-115.

movements like Taoism and Confucianism, then the imperial expansion, and then the conflict between the spiritual order of the Confucian type – the imperial details of the expansion in the middle Chou monarchy and preceding it, and then the result: a description of these events and the conflict between spiritual order and imperial expansion and the possibility of getting an harmonious end to it.

Then the third case: the origin of Greek history. Here you have again, first, spiritual movements which give you the criteria of order, like the Ionian and the Italian-Greek philosophy, then the expansion of the Persian Empire, of which in this case Hellas is the victim, and then the historiography of the Persian War and its area in Asia and Europe, and the pre-history of the Persian War. Thus, again, there is the conflict between the spiritual movements (the criterion for description) and the imperial expansion, as the disorder which has to be overcome. (The disorder in the Athenian-Spartan case is formulated by Thucydides, two generations after Herodotus, as the *kinesis*, a feverish movement of disorder in a society.)

That is the subject matter. We have three cases of this configuration of spiritual criteria, imperial expansion, and the genesis of historiography as a description of the conflict in action.

Such constants in history can be discerned. We see where interesting historiography begins: in the conflict, the tension. That requires, then, new language, which appears, though exactly where is not always discernable. Let me take the case of Herodotus. Herodotus speaks of the *ecumene* as the problem that is the subject matter of historiography. The *ecumene* is a new word. It appears in the 5th century. But where does it come from? In the descriptions of Herodotus it looks as if the foreign office of the Persian Empire had a political theory, that Persian rule had to be established over the *ecumene*, over all known mankind. There must have been such a Persian term meaning *ecumene*, [translated by Herodotus with that

word. In any case, the term] appears here for the first time as resistance to the foreign policy of an imperial expansion.

Herodotus is very sensitive to the meaning of imperial expansion, the beginning of the Persian empire which is in back of the imperial expansion. He discerns, for instance, a Persian chieftain who wants to resist the expansion of his followers: he does not want them to make attacks on neighbors which would expand then to the Medean and Babylonian empires, because, as he explains it to them, if you engage in an aggression and the aggression is successful you cease to be the community you were and become a new community of rulers over somebody else who has nothing to do with you.

The concupiscential expansion, as I call this phenomenon of aggression and of desire for rulership, is very well discerned by Herodotus as an Exodus from an existing order, not as the creation of a very questionable new order. Can a new order be created? Certainly an old order is destroyed if a limited tribe becomes the ruling group of an extended area with foreign populations.

Together, the Concupiscential Exodus, in this sense, and the Spiritual Exodus that is dissatisfied with the disorder created by empire, produce the peculiar „Exodus from the Cosmos“ which then requires the tension in the Alexandrian and the Roman Empires. And, later on, these are the motive forces in the existential experiences which tend to re-establish some sort of order while being prevented in the establishment of that order by expansions which create new social structures which, in turn, destroy old structures and leave people alienated in their [new] situation. If a leader is found, these alienated populations can then be the carriers of revolutionary movements directed against the established imperial situations, and so on.

So in history (again as a result of empirical observation) we have to distinguish a sequence of such imperial tensions caused by imperial expansion. There are: first, the old cosmological empires, which lead

to constructions such as the Sumerian King List, very similar in its structure to the Hegelian speculation on history as I have described it. The cosmological empire is the source of one type of historical construction, characterized especially by the falsification of historical facts in order to create one-line history. The creation of a one-line history is a phenomenon in history which begins as early as the third millennium, B.C.

Then you have a second level of empires, beyond the cosmological empires, when the *ecumene* (the conflict with Persia in Herodotus) comes into action, to cover the whole known world of man under one empire. I call this level the ecumenic empires which, when established in the form of a Persian empire, a Roman empire, and so on, lead to this type of establishment becoming a model which can be followed, as, for instance, in the Byzantine empire and in the Islamic empire, which gives you a further level, which I call the Orthodox empires. The Orthodox empires include the Eastern Byzantine, the Islamic, and the Western Holy Roman Empire.

Then, since there is an emperor and a lot of people supposedly in submission to him, the subject peoples have the idea that they could be emperors too. You find therefore at least as early as the 11th and 12th centuries in the West, the conception of the king in any peripheral community in that Western empire is an *imperator in regno suo*, the emperor in his own realm. This is the beginning of the national imperialism that culminates in the 18th and 19th centuries in the establishment of a new French empire, a new Austrian empire, a new empire of England, and so on, until you get to other sub-emperors in other areas of reality. (I believe there is now even an emperor in one of the minor states of Africa.) These national empires and emperors are the result of the conversion of an ecumenic imperialism into an ecumenism for national aspirations.

Finally, we must note the disorders created by the ideological empires, especially of the Marxist type.

IV. Existential Consciousness

Thus, a series of such concupiscential expansions, always in conflict with a better understanding of spiritual and rational order, is the tension that keeps going on and on in history up to the present, and we see no end in sight, unless you say: that is the meaning of history, this tension between spiritual movements and concupiscential ones. [The last sentence is a conjecture made from clues on an unclear tape.]

But there is still a constant everywhere. And the constant – we have now come to the end – is the tension itself, formulated by the Platonic *epekeina* and its *parousia*. In the *Republic*, in the Parable of the Cave, the prisoner in the Cave is forced to turn around, apparently by some resistance movement in his soul, toward the light that comes from the top of the cave. Then come the well-known steps until he advances to the light and sees what the problem is.

Now, this particular metaphor, this parable, is still found in Hegel. From Plato to Hegel a constant runs through the history of ideas. In Hegel it again appears in the Introduction to the *Logic*, where he explains that the *Logic* is directed against the metaphysical and ontological deformations of philosophy characteristic of the 18th century and attempts to recover the true order of history in opposition to the various ideological cover-ups and distortions. So he is still the Prisoner in the Cave of the opinions of his time which he considers to be insufficient. He is anti-metaphysical, he is anti-ontological, he is anti-philosophical and, in the *Phenomenology of the Spirit*, he wants to create a new type of speculation with a new type of solution. But how does one do that? Here the Platonic

periagoge again enters as the metaphor; the prisoner in the cave of contemporary metaphysics, ontology and theosophy, who wants to overcome it by his new type of Logic, must engage again in the *periagoge*; Hegel uses the same name, *periagoge*, „*Umkehrung*.“ One has to turn around, turn away from the assumption that current talk is talk about Reality in sense #1 (here – on the blackboard [i.e. thing-reality]). One has to be aware of the *Umkehrung* into the Reality #2 [i.e. It-reality]. What he tries to do is to find a new language which he calls Dialectic, to express the *Umkehrung* in the sense that Reality comprises both Reality #1 and Reality #2. Of course he can't find that new language because one cannot simply invent a new language against the language which we have, but he has the *program* of inventing a new language, and the program is an indication that he has seen the problem which I discussed earlier in the difficulties of Plato in finding the three levels of language corresponding to the three levels in conscious explanation.

Thus, in the end, we come back for the „meaning of history“, to the tensions, of which we do not know why they exist at all. In a purely doctrinal theological construction we will always be faced with the problem: why did God create the world which is in such disorder that one has then to be saved from its disorder? That [problem] cannot be solved simply on the doctrinal level. One has to go back to the experiential problem. That problem Plato considers a mystery. He raises it in the *Laws*, where he asks the question: „Is man a plaything of the god“ or is this tension there for some ulterior, important purpose? And his answer as a philosopher is: „We just don't know.“

Outline

„The Beyond and Its Parousia”¹⁶

Santa Clara, October 16th, 1982

I. Preliminaries

1. Title: Epekeina-Parousia—Rep. 508-509
Formative Presence in the Divine Beyond
The psyche to be formed the between tension
Resistance to Formation-Deformation
2. Paradox of Consciousness
Form in which the problem becomes acute since the
18th century.
The Collective Singular „History“ (R. Koselleck
„Die Herausbildung des modernen
Geschichtsbegriffs“, 1975)

Thing-Reality – Reality as Object for Consciousness-
Subject

It-Reality – Reality as Subject – Consciousness as
Predicate

Reflective-Distance – Symbols referring to the
Paradox

Deformation Tendency: To merge the parts of the
complex into a thing-entity.

„History“ – Dialectical Philosophy of History –
„Revolution“ – „Freedom“

¹⁶ There are two outlines of the lecture. The second, and more detailed one, from which Voegelin spoke, is reproduced here.

II. The Meaning of History

1. History as a „thing“ to be defined – No Eidos of History (Balthasar)
Aristotle's case: The Form of the Polis
No meaning of History
2. The talk about Meaning persists – Löwith, *Meaning in History*
3. *Solution I.* Marcus Aurelius (XI, 1)
Struggle for True Order in Action a known constant – *Logos*: the nature of the Whole (Cosmos) as Criterion – *Psyche Logike*: man conforming to the *Logos* of the Whole
Psyche Logike: sees itself, dissects, molds itself, reaps its own fruit; b. goes about the whole universe in space and time, comprehends cyclical regeneration. c. Love of neighbors, truthfulness, modesty, prizing nothing above itself.
A man of forty years, with any sense, in view of the sameness, „has seen all that has been and shall be“. Important: History as the Whole of reality – Homer-Hesiod.
Suicide-Epictetus-Death struggle
(Tacitus, Agricola)
4. *Solution II:*
Present: Culmination of the Historical Process of Truth and Meaning; -- Cumulative Knowledge – Enough Knowledge Accumulated to Pronounce on the Meaning
Comte: Positive Consciousness
Hegel: Self-Reflective Identity of Consciousness

Beginnings: *La querelle des anciens et modernes*
Bacon, *Novum Organum* I, Aph. 84 (1647)
Time the author of authors.

Pascal, *Préface pour le traite' divide* (1647)

Scripture – above reason -- to be accepted
 Physics, Mathematics, Philosophy – accumulate
 Mankind – One Man through the ages – as
 subject of history

Kant, *Ideen zu einer allgemeinen Geschichte in weltbürgerlicher Absicht* (1784)

History as progress toward Rational Order to be
 achieved in Time -- History as „Contribution“
 to the End of History –
 Conflict with the Meaning of Existence –
 Personal Immortality – Perfection through
 Death
 Life through Death – Death through Life in
 Time of History –
 The libidinous Fulfilment of Meaning is the
 End of Meaning

III. The Emergence of Meaning in History

1. Configuration: spiritual movement, Empire,
 Historiography
 - a. David Memoir (II Samuel – 9:20 – Kings 1-2)
 - b. Ssu-ma Ch'ien (145-86 BC)
 - c. Herodotus

2. Ecumenic Events
 - a. Herodotus and the Persian Empire – Persian
 ecumene – Concupiscential Exodus – Pneumatic
 Exodus – two types of exodus from the Cosmos
 - b. Polybius – the *orbis terrarium* as Ecumene
 - c. The Construction of the Sumerian King-List
 - d. Historia sacra et profana
 - e. Rex imperator in regne suo
 - f. The History of Mankind

Sequence of imperial conceptions:

Cosmological Empire – Ecumenic
Empire – Orthodox Empires – National
Empires – Ideological Empires

IV. Existential Consciousness

1. Aristotle – Myth and Philosophy – Search of the one divine ground – Equivalences
2. Plato: Parousia of the Beyond – the Saving Tale (Gospel) – Language of the gods – from Pluralism to Monism (*menosis*) – *Monogenes*: from Cosmos to Christ
3. Constancy of the Existential Story – Plato-Hegel

AFTERWARD

A. The Lecture

Voegelin delivered the lecture „The Beyond and Its Parousia“ on October 16, 1982 at the symposium, „The Meaning of History“, held at Santa Clara University in California. As was his custom, he spoke from notes and the text that has come down to us is the transcript of his tape recorded presentation¹. The typescript was partially corrected by Voegelin; the editor of the version offered here has confined himself to correcting idiomatic errors, reducing the redundancies common to oral communication, and making a few other minor grammatical and syntactical changes.

Since *The New Science of Politics* (1952),² Voegelin had attempted to revive the philosophical basis of political science, turning to Plato and Aristotle for the principles needed to distinguish the sphere of knowledge from that of opinion and ideology. He referred to the procedure outlined in *The New Science* as the „Aristotelian method“. Science (*episteme*) does not begin with a *tabula rasa*, but with the symbols of a society's self-interpretation. These are then examined in light of a theory of human nature in order to resolve the rational

¹ Voegelin's notes, the program of the symposium and the typescript which has been reproduced here can be found in: Voegelin Archive, Hoover Institution, Stanford, California, Box 85, Folder 10. We thank Paul Caringella and the Trustees of the Voegelin estate for permission to publish „The Beyond and Its Parousia“.

² Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952. Subsequent quotations will be taken from Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics*, in: *Modernity Without Restraint: The Political Religions, The New Science of Politics, And Science, Politics, and Gnosticism, The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, Vol. 5, ed. with an Introduction by Manfred Henningsen, Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000, 75-243. *Die Neue Wissenschaft der Politik*, hrsg. und mit einem Nachwort von Peter J. Opitz, München: Fink-Verlag, 2004.

content of the pre-analytical symbols into meaningful theoretical concepts³.

Just as *The New Science* is not about Plato and Aristotle but turns to them for the principles of political science, so the recourse to the „beyond and its presence“ in the Santa Clara lecture is undertaken in order to find an adequate scientific terminology for addressing the question of whether history has meaning.

Voegelin`s lecture has four parts:

1) Preliminaries

In the first part he explicates the philosophical language needed to conduct the epistemic analysis. The two principal words of the title, „*epekeina*“, translated as the „Beyond“; and the Greek word „*Parousia*“ („presence“), are taken from Plato. They refer to the divine reality that is beyond the cosmos and, at the same time, present as a „formative force“ in human consciousness. They refer, further, to the experience of the soul's maximal opening to reality. Voegelin distinguishes between three levels of language corresponding to three structures of reality and the modes of consciousness appropriate to them: „thing-reality“ is the language of the subject-object relationship given in the experience of objects in the world; „It-reality“ is that within which the subject-object relationship itself is an event; and „reflective-distance“ is the consciousness of the contradiction that both „thing-reality“ and „It-reality“ are „reality“, and of the participation of consciousness in these contradictions. Historically language was developed to express „thing-reality“ and, for that reason, it is impossible to use language that was developed to describe „things“ in order to articulate higher forms of reality without indulging in paradox. Such unavoidable linguistic paradoxes reflect the structure of reality itself.

³ *The New Science*, 109ff.

2) The Meaning of History

Once Voegelin has put the discussion on a scientific basis by identifying the modes of consciousness appropriate to expressing the complex structure of being and the languages appropriate to the various levels of reality, he returns, in the second part of his lecture, to the symposium's theme; now, however, with the critical vocabulary necessary to analyze the topical level of discourse expressed in the words, the „meaning of history“.

Here he raises the question: If the notion of a „meaning of history“ is not a description of reality – what is it?

The idea reflects a change of consciousness that came clearly into view in the 18th century, a time in which a whole series of words were taken out of their particular contexts and came to denote „absolute processes“ in which, supposedly, even human nature was transformed. Such absolutes, for example „freedom“ or „history“, reflect a deformation of consciousness in which events that take place in It-reality are expressed in terms of thing-reality; or in which the meditative termini of reflective-distance, such as „reality“, „structure“, and „divinity“, are treated as objects in time and space.

The notion of a „meaning of history“ however is wide spread, and this fact must also be accounted for. To do so Voegelin briefly surveys the changes that the term „history“, understood as the acts of human beings, has undergone in the course of time. In the world in which the cosmos was home to both immortals and mortals, referred to by Voegelin as the world from „Homer to Hesiod“, the logos of man was understood to be part of, and co-substantive with, cosmic order. On the basis of this partial identity with the logos of the cosmos, it was assumed that by the time a man reached maturity he had a pretty sound notion of what can take place in the world, based upon the experience of his own psyche.

In the period that followed the world of Homer and Hesiod, with its differentiation of consciousness⁴, the logos of order was no longer experienced as being within the cosmos, but as transcending it. For this reason the human being himself was no longer completely of the cosmos, but became conscious of himself in his orientation to a transcendent ground that, through him, reached into the cosmos. The tension between the reality of the human being who is both in the world and at the same time a participant in the world-transcending ground of order, renders the relation of the human being to the logos of order more complicated. This more complex relationship is expressed in such symbolic forms as revelation and philosophy which replace the symbol of the logos of the psyche embedded in the cosmos. But neither in the cosmos undifferentiated by the consciousness of transcendent being, nor in the cosmos created by a divine Beyond of the cosmos, did history have a „meaning“ in itself; in both cases it referred to acts of human participation in Divine order.

In contrast to the ancients, the claims of modern thinkers to know the „meaning of history“ are based on two assumptions. It is taken for granted that so much time has now passed, that the historical record is so far on the way to completion, that one can know what „history“ has in store for future human beings. The second assumption, and the more serious error, is that one can know history's essence. In this assumption „history“ is no longer viewed as a term expressing human acts, but as a thing itself, determining them. However, while „things“ have natures and can therefore be defined, the human being's action and suffering in life cannot be understood in terms of

⁴ See „Homer and Mycenae“ and „Hesiod“, in: *The World of the Polis, Order and History*, Vol. 2, Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1957, 67-111, 126-165. Eric Voegelin, *Ordnung und Geschichte*, hrsg. von Peter J. Opitz und Dietmar Herz, Bd. VI, *Die Welt der Polis*, hrsg. von Jürgen Gebhardt, München: Fink, 2002, 93-141, 157-201.

thing-reality, for they involve more levels of being than that of „things“. When the „immanent“ pole of the meditative pair of symbols -- immanent-transcendent -- that express the field in which human action and suffering take place, is assumed to encompass the whole of reality, transcendent being is obscured and the spiritual process of divine reality, in which the human being participates by virtue of reason, is reduced to mere temporality. But since immanent being, isolated from transcendent being, is without reason, the divine ground is replaced by an inner-worldly process and the human being reduced to a cog in its senseless mechanism: the life in the tension between life and death, imperfection and perfection, is deformed and the human being loses sight of the realms of revelation, philosophy, and history.

3) The Emergence of Meaning in History

Having demonstrated that the topic of the „meaning of history“ is itself an expression of spiritual alienation, Voegelin turns in part three of his lecture to the origin of „history“ as a symbolical form of analysis.

Voegelin identifies the emergence of the symbol in three ancient civilizations: Israel, Greece, and China. As a symbolical form „history“ is a response to a particular stage in civilizational development when multi-civilizational empires expand and the violent disorder they create conflicts with the spirit's understanding of rational order.

4) Existential Consciousness

In the fourth part of his lecture, Voegelin describes how the meditative understanding of reality is attained. It is necessary to turn away from the temporal world of disorder to the order of the

Beyond. This can be done because the divine order of the Beyond is also present in the soul of the human being. The human being's turn to order, the *conversio*, is an act of reason that is both theoretical and practical, for the search for the truth of life is itself a way of life. But the maximum opening of the soul to transcendent being does not change the human experience of reality that was concisely expressed in Leibniz's questions: Why is there anything, instead of simply nothing at all? (the question of divine creation); why are things as they are? (The question of why we must seek salvation from a world created by god.)

Although the philosopher has no answers to these questions, for they can only be given in revelation, they must be kept open in order prevent reality from being falsified⁵.

B. „The Beyond and Its Parousia“ in the context of Voegelin's „late work“

In his Santa Clara lecture Voegelin resolves the topical question of the „Meaning of History“, into questions of consciousness and of the adequate expression of the concrete human being's tension to the

⁵ In more traditional religious terms Voegelin reached the same conclusion in his 1938 work, *The Political Religions*. The realm of politics is principally open to transcendence. However knowledge of this order does not remove the mystery of being and Voegelin posed the same two questions that he raised 44 years later: Why is there something; why is there not nothing? and, Why is it the way it is?

Also the task of the philosopher is outlined in a similar manner in 1938. The crisis of contemporary society is seen as the loss of religious experience. This experience can only be regained by a religious personality, but the philosopher, knowing of the need to keep the horizon of transcendence open, can help to prepare the ground so that when a religious personality appears, it may find a spiritual atmosphere in which its work may bear fruit. See Eric Voegelin, *The Political Religions*, 70-71, 24; *Die Politischen Religionen*, 64-65, 6.

ground of being. 'History' is placed beside the other symbolical forms that interpret the experience of the ground, such as 'myth', 'revelation', 'philosophy', and 'mysticism'. This procedure reflects the character of Voegelin's late work in general and has its origin in the shift in emphasis that led to the long delay in publishing volume four of *Order and History*⁶.

Thus, „The Beginning and Its Parousia“ can be viewed in the light of the investigations that take their starting point from the insights that led to the shift of focus between volume three of *Order and History* in 1957 and volume four in 1974. Let us therefore take a brief look at how Voegelin himself characterized this shift.

⁶ This late work includes: Volume 4 of *Order and History, The Ecumenic Age*, Baton Rouge, The Louisiana Press, 1974; in German as: *Ordnung und Geschichte*, hrsg. von Peter J. Opitz und Dietmar Herz, Bd. VIII, *Das Ökumenische Zeitalter: Die Legitimität der Antike*, hrsg. von Thomas Hollweck, und Bd. IX, *Das Ökumenische Zeitalter, Weltherrschaft und Philosophie*, hrsg. von Manfred Henningsen (beide Bde. München: Fink, 2004); the posthumous Vol. 5, *In Search of Order*, Baton Rouge: University of Louisiana Press, 1987, one of whose sub-sections bears the title „The Beyond and Its Parousia“, in: Eric Voegelin, *Order and History*, 96f. German translation in: *Ordnung und Geschichte*, Bd. X, *Auf der Suche nach Ordnung*, hrsg. von Paul Caringella und Gilbert Weiss, München: Fink, 2004. Other texts important in this connection are: „The Beginning and the Beyond: A Meditation on Truth“ (1977), in: *What is History? And other Late Unpublished Writings*, ed. with an Introduction by Thomas Hollweck and Paul Caringella, *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, Vol. 24, Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1990, 173-233; Eric Voegelin, *Structures of Consciousness* (1978), transcribed and ed. by Zdravko Planinc, in: *Voegelin- Research News*, Vol. II, no. 3, Sept. 1996; Eric Voegelin, *Wisdom and the Magic of the Extreme: A Meditation*, *Eranos Jahrbuch* 46, Frankfurt, 1977. Republished in: *Southern Review*, n.s., XVII, 1983, 235-87. Now in *Published Essays 1966-1985*, ed. with an Introduction by Ellis Sandoz, *The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, Vol. 12, Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 1990, 315-376; Eric Voegelin, „Quod Deus Dicitur“ (1985) in *Ebd.*, 376-395. German in: *Ordnung, Bewußtsein, Geschichte: Späte Schriften – Eine Auswahl*, hrsg. von Peter J. Opitz, Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1988, 180-205.

The original program of *Order and History* was succinctly formulated in the words: „The order of history emerges from the history of order“⁷. When the program was conceived Voegelin identified five forms of symbolical order which he intended to investigate, arrayed chronologically on a single time line. These five forms, and their planned presentation in six volumes, were listed in the Preface to the series printed in *Israel and Revelation*⁸. However, by applying the principle, that „the order of history emerges from the history of order“ problems arose; and for the simple reason, that the assumption that order and its symbolic forms unfold on a single time line was not confirmed by the historical sources. Spiritual outbursts, or insights into the relation of the human being to the divine ground, take place in widely separated civilizational contexts and cannot be brought into one line of history without falsifying them. At this point the very notion that history unfolds on a single time line itself had to become an object of investigation. For, if history does not take place along a single line of differentiation, what is the motive for trying to force it into one? This question led to the discovery of the symbolic form of historiogenesis, the attempt, on the part of empire theologians (in the ancient world) and ideologues (in the modern), to construct a history running from an immemorial mythical past into the speculator's present, thus falsifying humankind's actual experience⁹.

⁷ Eric Voegelin, *Order and History*, Vol. 1, *Israel and Revelation*, Baton Rouge: Louisiana University Press, 1956, ix. *Ordnung und Geschichte*, hrsg. von Peter J. Opitz und Dietmar Herz, Bd. I, *Die Kosmologischen Reiche des Alten Orients – Mesopotamien und Ägypten*, hrsg. von Jan Assmann, 27.

⁸ Ebd., x., Ebd., 28.

⁹ Eric Voegelin, „Historiogenesis“. Originally in: *Philosophisches Jahrbuch*, Freiburg-München, 1960, Bd. 68, 419-446, and in: *Philosophia Viva*, hrsg. von M. Müller and M. Schmaus, Freiburg-München, 1960, 419-446. Subsequently in: Eric Voegelin, *Anamnesis*, München, 1966, 79-117, and in: *The Ecumenic Age, Order and History*, Vol. IV, Baton Rouge:

The fact that history does not take place on a single line of differentiation had, of course, also come to the attention of other scholars who, far from wishing to falsify the historical record, pointed to the fact that spiritual outbursts occur contemporaneously in widely separated civilizations where the question of influence can be ruled out. However, such studies as Karl Jaspers' *Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte* and Arnold Toynbee's multi-volume *Study in History*, so Voegelin, due to the humanistic prejudices of their authors, view spiritual experiences from the outside, and for that reason fail to interpret them in their depth¹⁰.

As a result of abandoning the notion of a single line of civilizational development, „history“, which once had been the guiding principle of Voegelin's investigations, itself became part of a more sharply focused investigation centered on the consciousness of the ground of being and on the modes appropriate to expressing the structure of reality.

Important as it is to call attention to this shift of emphasis,¹¹ it is equally important to avoid the mistake of implying that it amounts to a change of intent. To emphasize discontinuity over the continuity in Voegelin's work would be to overlook the philosophical quest that guided it and, instead, to concentrate on externals. Therefore, in

Louisiana University Press, 1974; 114-171, *Ordnung und Geschichte*, Bd. VIII, 2004.

¹⁰ Eric Voegelin, *Order and History*, Vol. 4, *The Ecumenic Age*, 1-11. On the matter of the depth of historical events, see Eric Voegelin, „What is History“, in: *What is History? And other unpublished Essays, The Collected Works of Eric Voegelin*, 1-52; here 12f.

¹¹ And it is clearly present before the publication of volume 4 of *Order and History*. Its presence is after all what caused the long delay in the publication of volume 4. The essays published in *Anamnesis*, in 1966, clearly reveal the new direction his studies were beginning to take, especially those in parts I and III and „Eternal Being in Time“ in part II. See Eric Voegelin, *Anamnesis*.

conclusion, a few notes on the overriding, and principal, context of Voegelin's work, in which „The Beginning and Its Parousia“ has its place, are in order.

C. The continuity of Voegelin's work and the place of the lecture in this overriding context

The theme that the order of society is constituted in the human being's orientation to the transcendental ground of being is present in Voegelin's earliest work. In 1921, in *Wedekind: A Contribution to the sociology of contemporary society*, Voegelin, while still fettered by the language of „values“, refers to Plato's *Republic* and speaks of the „vertical“ value of love, the world-transcending *ordo amoris*, that joins the „horizontal“ values of the various political estates into one society.¹² Related to this theme is that the search for the ground of being must be more than a gathering of information about reality; it requires the existential engagement of the searcher himself. Voegelin addresses this point in his dissertation in 1922 in reference to Henri Bergson's concept of intuition. The philosopher, guided by intuition, descends into the soul's depths to bring up the material that is then worked upon by his disciples. Yet the disciple cannot merely treat what the master has found as information. In order to understand what the master has grasped, the disciple must also transcend the level of the mere analysis of results and plumb the depths of his own soul.¹³

¹² See Eric Voegelin, *Wedekind: Ein Beitrag zur Soziologie der Gegenwart*, hrsg. von Thomas Hollweck, *Occasional Papers*, IIB, München: Eric-Voegelin-Archiv, April 1996, 42f.

¹³ Erich Voegelin, „Wechselwirkung und Gezweigung“, Dissertation, University of Vienna, 1923 41-43. Voegelin Archive, Hoover Institution, Stanford, California, Box 51, Folder 5.

Ten years later, in the „Theory Of Governance“ (ca. 1930-1932), a more mature Voegelin expressed the same thought in words that differ little from those he then used for the rest of his life. He develops his argument in relation to Augustine's meditations in Books X and XI of his *Confessions*:

„The determination of what a person essentially is, takes place, when the attempt is made with adequate means, in a basic form of philosophical thinking which we will characterize by the name...meditation“.¹⁴ The quest for truth is a way of life and the individual who chooses it cannot take what others have found but must undertake his own meditation, otherwise he cannot understand the meaning that others have experienced¹⁵. Voegelin describes the nature of the meditation as „the step by step separating out of all that ...which is merely temporal, until the soul stands naked before God. This place can only be negatively determined as that which is none of the places that the meditative course has passed through.“ Here Voegelin describes the realm of the paradoxical use of language appropriate to what he would later call „reflective-distance“, the mode of consciousness that reflects on its symbols of the Divine ground. Voegelin continues: This „place“, beyond all temporal „places“ is „radically the other place. What it is positively can only be viewed by the one who follows the whole movement of the confession, who has himself enacted the confession to God.“¹⁶

To understand an individual's life one must penetrate to his motivational center. The philosopher's motivational center is the love of wisdom, or the quest for truth that is not merely an activity of the intellect but involves the person as a whole. Voegelin's under-

¹⁴ Erich Voegelin, „Herrschaftslehre“, chap. I, p. 1., Box 53, Folder 5, Voegelin Archive, Hoover Institution, Stanford, California.

¹⁵ See *Anamnesis*, 33.

¹⁶ „Herrschaftslehre“, chap. I, p. 1.

standing of this insight can be illustrated in his evaluation of the life work of Arnold Toynbee, written at a time when Toynbee's critics focused on the supposed break following volume six of the twelve volume, *Study of History*. Because Voegelin understood the depth of Toynbee's motivation from the depths of his own he was able to point out the shortsightedness of such criticism. For that reason, Voegelin's defense of Toynbee gives us insight into how we should approach Voegelin's work as well, and, for that reason, an extensive quotation from it may perhaps be pardoned here:

„A *Study of History*, as it lies before us in its completed form, is an inquiry concerning the truth about the order of history. It is an inquiry in the classical sense of a *zetema*, a search for truth both cognitive and existential. Definitions in the course of a *zetema*, however, are cognitive resting points, which articulate the view of reality that has been gained at the respective stage in the existential advance toward truth. As a consequence, the validity of the definitions has two dimensions. In the one direction, they must be tested against the data of reality to which they purport to refer; in the other direction, they must be measured by the existential level reached in the search for truth. Moreover, the two dimensions of validity are related to one another, insofar as the question which is a datum of reality depends for its answer on the existential level reached. What is relevant on a lower level may become irrelevant on a higher level, and vice versa. Hence, the definitions that articulate the view of reality achieved in earlier stages of the *zetema* are liable to be superseded by definitions reached at higher existential levels. In an existentially authentic *zetema* we are faced, therefore, with a series of definitions, the later ones qualifying and superseding the earlier ones; and under no circumstances must they be pitted against one another on the level of a logic of the external world, which ignores the logic of existence.“¹⁷

¹⁷ Eric Voegelin, Toynbee's *History* as a Search for Truth (1961), in: *The Collected Work of Eric Voegelin*, Vol. 11, *Published Essays 1953-1965*, ed. with an Introduction by Ellis Sandoz Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2000, 100-113, here 100f.

Because the Beyond reaches into the present as the formative force in the soul each human being has a double „present“: 1) in each temporal moment in the world and, 2) in the divine Beyond „present“ in each moment of time. As two aspects of the one human reality, the distinction between the „temporal“ and the „eternal“ cannot be pushed to the extreme of complete separation. Their intimate relationship is revealed in the act of meditation which Voegelin called the basic form of philosophizing.

In the temporal sense the meditation begins at a certain point in time. In the spiritual sense it takes place when the meditating person realizes that, far from it being „his meditation“, it is more accurate to say that the meditation is the response to a movement that started in the divine ground. This realization is the experience of the *conversio* -- Voegelin preferred the Greek term *periagoge*. The spiritual beginning is the „end“ of the meditation in the temporal sense because the *conversio* marks the qualitative transformation from a life rooted in the world to a life oriented to the divine ground that transcends it.

For this reason, the unity of the philosopher's *zetema*, which is the life of contemplation itself, cannot be broken up into the „temporal“ and „spiritual“. Long before the spiritual quest becomes luminous to itself, its temporal beginning is shaped by the Parousia of the Beyond¹⁸. Therefore one may say of Voegelin's work what T. S.

¹⁸ „In der Erfahrung und Sprache Aristoteles findet sich der Mensch in einem Zustand der Unwissenheit (*agnoia*, *amathia*) betreffend den Ordnungsgrund (*aition*, *arche*) seiner Existenz. Er könnte jedoch sein Nicht-Wissen nicht als solches erkennen, wenn er nicht von einer Unruhe ergriffen wäre, die Unwissenheit zu fliehen (*pheugein ten agnoian*) und das Wissen (*episteme*) zu suchen..... Was dem Begehren die Richtung weist und es dadurch sachhaltig macht, ist der Grund selbst, insofern er den Menschen anziehend bewegt (*kinetai*). Die Spannung zum Grund, deren der Mensch sich bewußt ist, muß also als eine Einheit verstanden werden, die zwar ausgelegt, aber nicht in Teile zerlegt werden kann. Die Exegese rückläufig verfolgend, müßten wir daher sagen: Ohne die *kinesis* des Angezogen-

Eliot said of the meditative search for the ground in general: „In my beginning is my end“ – „In my end is my beginning”.¹⁹

München, 1. Mai 2004

William Petropulos

Werdens vom Grund gäbe es kein Begehren nach ihm....“ Eric Voegelin, *Anamnesis*, München: Piper, 1965, 288-289.

¹⁹ These are the first and last lines of „East Coker”. See T. S. Eliot, *Four Quartets*, London: Faber&Faber, 1943, 19-29. Compare Eric Voegelin, „Notes on T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*”, Voegelin Archive, Hoover Institution, Standord, California, Box 63, Box 1.

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