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Eric Voegelin on the Truth of In-Between Life

A Meditation on Existential Unrest

GREG RUSSELL

Northeastern Louisiana University

One of the most illuminating, if not persistent, themes to emerge from the work of the late Eric Voegelin is the virtual eclipse of philosophical meditation. In seeking to clarify man's experience of reality, as well as the reality of his experience, Voegelin singled out the question of transcendence as the decisive problem of philosophy. According to Voegelin, philosophizing about time and existence has become the modern equivalent of the Christian mystic's meditation. What has come to its end, then, is the philosopher's quest to circumscribe the structures of existential consciousness ("Wisdom and the Magic of the Extreme: A Meditation," *The Southern Review* 17 [Summer 1981]: 285).

The fundamental motivating structure of philosophical consciousness arises from the contemplative response to the question of the truth of the reason of things, the loving search for the mysterious and elusive ground of reality. The philosopher stands as the self-reflective man who is sensitive to the reality of the Whole, open to the horizon of wonder and mystery that surrounds the existence of man and all that is, and who is open to the sustaining participation of the reality of nature's time and space and of man's history and mind in the divine ground. Moreover, the philosopher is called upon to clarify the question of the meaning of the process of reality, while preserving its mystery. The process of reality becomes intelligible to human consciousness through participation in all levels of reality from the corporeal to the divine ground. The process of consciousness is the "In-Between" (*metaxy*) of the tension bounded by the polarities of immanent and transcendent being.

The genius of the classic philosophers is to have discovered reason as the source of order in the psyche of man. The unfolding of noetic consciousness is seen by the Hellenic philosophers as a struggle in the *metaxy* between the immortalizing order of the psyche and the mortalizing forces of the apeirontic lust of being in time ("Reason: The Classic Experience," *The Southern Review* 10 [Spring 1974]: 237, 261). Both Plato and Aristotle struggled to clarify the formative center of experience, the *metaxy*, and to protect the noetic center against the deformative forces prevalent at the time. In *Anamnesis*, Voegelin pointed out that the term *metaxy* has its origin in the concrete experience of a philosophizing man seeking to designate the essence of his humanity (trans. G. Niemeyer, p. ix). The In-Between character of existence is of particular impor-

tance in understanding response to the movements of the divine presence, for the experience of such movements is not located in man's stream of consciousness, in the immanentist sense, but in the In-Between of the divine and human.

The objective of this paper is to more specifically examine Voegelin's exploration of Plato's *metaxy*. Plato symbolizes the experience of the noetic quest as a transition in the psyche from mortality to immortality. Particular consideration will be given to the meaning of *noesis* as an active inquiry into the transcendence of human existence, thereby establishing the poles of consciousness: immanent and transcendent. In conclusion, Voegelin's explanation of the In-Between will be portrayed as a meditative inquiry into the structures of existential consciousness. This perspective enabled Voegelin to expand on the historical dimension of meditation with special relevance for Plato's situation in the Hellas of the fifth and fourth centuries B.C.

METAXY REALITY: FROM COMPACT TO DIFFERENTIATED CONSCIOUSNESS

According to Voegelin's appraisal of the history of experience and symbolization, there have been two historical modes of experience: on the first level, that of the "primary experience of the cosmos," and, on a more advanced level, that of "differentiated consciousness" or the "differentiated experience of existence" ("Immortality, Experience and Symbol," *Harvard Theological Review* 60 [1967]: 272). The primary level of experience is not primary in the sense of being the most fundamental; rather it is the level of interpretation that first manifests itself historically. There were, preceding philosophical culture as in Hellas, cosmological cultures, such as Egypt and Mesopotamia, which expressed themselves in terms of myths. Voegelin, like Mircea Eliade, pointed out that a myth is a technique of imputing a ground to an object of experience. Describing the compact vision of cosmological myth, Voegelin wrote:

The cosmos of the primary experience is neither the external world of objects given to subjects of cognition, nor is it the world that has been created by a world-transcendent God . . . It is the whole, *to pan*, of earth below and a heaven above—of celestial bodies and their movements; of seasonal changes; of fertility rhythms in plant and animal life . . .; and above all, as Thales still knew, it is a cosmos full of gods. This last point, that the gods are intracosmic cannot be stressed strongly enough, because it is almost eclipsed today by such facile categorizations as polytheism and monotheism. The numbers are not important, but rather the consciousness of divine reality as intracosmic or transmundane (*Order and History*, 4 vols., 1956–74, vol. 4, p. 68).

In Voegelin's analysis, the experiential field of the primary experience is made up of individual entities that tend to fall into four categories: God, man,

the world, and society. As symbolized in the ancient cosmologically-concerned societies, these entities are not usually thought of as entirely discrete but as participating, on a hierarchy of levels, in an underlying continuum of reality, a “primordial community of being,” which as a whole constitutes the “cosmos” that embraces all partners. In other words, the primary experience embodies the dual attributes of “consubstantiality” and “separateness of substances.” In *The Ecumenic Age*, Voegelin argued that “the cosmos is not a thing among others; it is the background of reality against which all existent things exist; it is reality in the mode of nonexistence” (*OH*, vol. 4, p. 72). The key point in Voegelin’s appraisal is that it is the experience of this underlying embracingness of all that exists which is expressed in the cosmological symbolism (*OH*, vol. 1, pp. 1–16). In short, the cosmos of the primary experience encompasses the tension of existence out of nonexistence. The symbolism, however, is unstable. Intra-cosmic areas of reality can provide one another with analogies of being, but these analogies cannot adequately articulate the tension of the primary experience (*OH*, vol. 4, p. 76).

The core of the primary experience was formulated by Anaximander (fl. 560 B.C.) in his celebrated fragment. Reality was described by Anaximander as a process in which things emerge free from, and disappear into, the nonexistence of the *apeiron*, the Unlimited (*OH*, vol. 4, p. 174). Things do not exist out of themselves; rather they exist out of the ground to which they return. Existence, from Anaximander’s perspective, involves participation in two modes of reality: (1) in the *apeiron* as the timeless *arche* of things and (2) in the ordered succession of things as a manifestation of the *apeiron* in time. The experience of the tension of existence out of nonexistence has the character of the In-Between reality, governed by the tension of life and death. At the level of primary experience, one can go no further than the simple elucidation of textual material. Any attempt at paraphrasing the cosmological symbolization of the primary experience would destroy its compactness (i.e., experience having distinguishable features yet to be noticed as distinct). Voegelin pointed out that “one must be aware of identifying the immortals as gods, the mortals as men, or life and death as that of human beings, or the things (*ta onta*) as inorganic objects, organisms, men, or societies” (*OH*, vol. 4, pp. 174–175).

The inadequate articulation of the tension in the primary experience of the cosmos is resolved only by the differentiation of the divine ground through its revelation in the soul. This is the process that took place in the Hellenic *poleis*, which, because of the absence of imperial structure, permitted the philosopher to freely explore the rise and fall of the universally human reality or order, without restriction to its mediation by an empire (David J. Walsh, “Philosophy in Voegelin’s Work,” in *Eric Voegelin’s Thought: A Critical Appraisal*, ed. Ellis Sandoz [Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1982], pp. 140–141). The primary, cosmological style of truth is unstable because there is a constant pressure on consciousness to recognize the element of radical discontinuity—

the full beyondness—in its directional tendency (*Anamnesis*, p. 76). In describing the transition from the primary, cosmological view to differentiated consciousness, Voegelin suggested that “the leap in being differentiates world-transcendent Being as the source of all being, and correspondingly attaches to the world the character of immanence” (*OH*, vol. 3, p. 277).

In the *Philebus* (16c–17a), Plato exhibits a concern with the ordering of the psyche through its tension toward the divine ground. Socrates introduces the discussion by alluding to the revelatory character of the differentiated symbols:

There is a gift of the gods to men, so at least it appears to me. From their abode they let it be brought down by someone like Prometheus, together with a fire exceeding light. The men of old, who were better than we are and dwelt nearer to the gods, passed on this gift in saying: That all things that are ever said to exist have their being from One and Many, and conjoin in themselves Limited (*peras*) and Unlimited (*apeiron*) (quoted in *OH*, vol. 4, p. 184).

Plato characterizes the philosopher’s role in history as open to reality and willing to let the gift of the gods illuminate his existence. In addition, Plato’s exegesis of the differentiated experience is symbolized in the mystery of being between the poles of the One (*hen*) and the Unlimited (*apeiron*). Where the One changes over into the Many (*polloi*) and the Unlimited into the Limited (*peras*), there arises, between the two poles, the number (*arithmos*) and form (*idea*) of things (*OH*, vol. 4, p. 184). Voegelin stressed that this area of form and number is the In-Between (*metaxy*) of the One and Unlimited.

The *metaxy* is a symbol of rich complexity and depth, drawing on the language of divinity and of spirits as well as of man and psyche:

Man experiences himself as tending beyond human imperfection toward the perfection of the divine ground that moves him. The spiritual man, the *daimonios aner*, as he is moved in his quest of the ground, moves somewhere between knowledge and ignorance (*metaxy sophias kai amathias*). “The whole realm of the spiritual (*daimonion*) is halfway . . . between (*metaxy*) god and man” (Symp. 202a). Thus, the in-between . . . is not an empty space between the poles of the tension but the “realm of the spiritual”; it is the reality of “man’s convergence with the gods” (202–203), the mutual participation (*methexis, metalepsis*) of human in divine, and divine in human, reality (*Anamnesis*, p. 103).

The In-Between represents the meeting ground of the human and divine in a consciousness of their distinction and interpenetration (“On Hegel: A Study in Sorcery,” in *The Study of Time*, ed. J. Fraser et al. [New York: Springer-Verlag, 1972], 1:434). The philosopher is not allowed to settle down on the positive pole of existential tension; only the tension in its polarity of real and nonreal is the full truth of reality. According to Voegelin, Plato’s key insight was the discovery of consciousness as the In-Between of immanent and transcendent being, so that it participates experientially in both, and the discovery that the experience which motivates philosophizing is the movement of the soul in response to the pull of divine reality.

In Plato's *Symposium*, the erotic tension in human life is symbolized as an In-Between reality. The truth of existence in erotic tension is conveyed by the prophetess Diotima. Eros is the son of Poros (riches) and Penia (poverty). He is daimon, something between god and man just as the spiritual man who is in search of truth is somewhere between knowledge and ignorance. Socrates says that the spiritual powers "interpret and convey things human to the gods and things divine to men; carrying prayers and sacrifices from below, the answers and commandments from above; being themselves midway between the two, they bring them together and weld them into one great whole." Accordingly, "only through the mediation of the spiritual powers can man, whether waking or sleeping, have converse with the gods" (*OH*, vol. 4, p. 185).

The truth of reality takes shape as a dialogue in Plato's soul, an event in which the process of reality becomes luminous to itself. This, for Voegelin, is the epistemological crux behind the truth of reality apperceived by Plato. The truth of man's existence is achieved by a dialectical movement in the soul which flows between knowledge and ignorance. Plato's insight is itself true insofar as it constitutes "the exegesis of the erotic tension experienced" and arises "only when the tension is experienced in such a manner that it breaks forth in its own dialogical exegesis" (*OH*, vol. 4, p. 186). The truth of the *metaxy* is viewed as "the event of an experience articulating itself." This helps to explain why Socrates is reluctant to make a "speech" on Eros and allows the truth to unfold through his recollecting of the dialogue with Diotima. Moreover, the dialogue as it occurs in the human soul is not one man's subjective perception of reality, but an event in the *metaxy* where man has converse with the divine ground of the process that is common to all men. The dialogical movement within the soul and the variation between the two extremes uncovers the meaning of existence as a movement in reality toward noetic luminosity (*OH*, vol. 4, p. 186).

THE *METAXY* AND NOETIC CONSCIOUSNESS

Voegelin stipulated that "the unfolding of noetic consciousness in the psyche of the classic philosophers is not an idea, or a tradition, but an event in the history of mankind" ("Reason: The Classic Experience," p. 284). Philosophy conceived of as the symbolic form of the noetic mode of participation is distinguished by the philosopher's discovery of self-reflective reason as the specific essence of man and the substance of the psyche, which knows both itself and its affinity with the ultimate divine reality. "The core of the classic philosophical effort—and of human nature itself—is openness to the Ground as the vertical tension of existence which is rendered intelligible through the manifold symbols of rational exegesis called *noesis*" (Ellis Sandoz, *The Voegelinian Revolution: A Biographical Introduction* [Baton Rouge, LA: Louisiana State University Press, 1981], p. 185). In his discussion of the structure of existence,

Voegelin distinguishes between four functions of *nous*: (1) the “illumination” of the transitory nature of human existence; (2) the apprehension of “transcendence”—of an ultimate ground of all existing things; (3) the formation of an “idea” of the structure of existence (“ideation”); and (4) the rational elaboration of experience and its components. (See Dante Germino, *Beyond Ideology: The Revival of Political Theory* [New York: Harper and Row, 1967], pp. 163–165.)

The epochal feat of the classic philosophers was the articulation and symbolization of the questioning consciousness as the essential constituent of humanity. Voegelin examines the structure of the noetic experience in which the symbolism of philosophy was produced; he reconstructs it from a series of suggestions that can be brought together from expressions scattered throughout the writings of Plato and Aristotle. The first level of noetic experience is mirrored by the Socrates of the *Theaetetus* who recognizes in the experience (*pathos*) of wondering (*thaumazein*) the mark of the philosopher. The relevant symbols embodied in the Socratic experience include: seeking or searching (*zetein*), search (*zetesis*), and questioning (*aporein*, *diaporein*) (“Reason: The Classic Experience,” p. 243). A second level entails the philosopher feeling himself moved (*kinein*) by some unknown force to ask the questions; he feels himself drawn (*helkein*) into the search. Third, a man can become conscious of his questioning unrest as caused by the state of ignorance from which he yearns to arrive at true knowledge—the key terms are ignorance (*agonia*, *amathia*), flight from ignorance (*pheugein ten agnoian*), turning round (*periagoge*), knowledge (*eidenai*, *episteme*) (Walsh, p. 142).

The compulsion to raise the questions regarding the ground of all existence is grandly elaborated in Plato’s parable of the cave where the prisoner is moved by the unknown force to turn around (*periagoge*) and begin his ascent to the light. Specifically, Voegelin considered this infrastructure of experience to be the catalyst that brought the pre-Socratic occupation with noetic problems into focus as “a concern with the ordering of the psyche through its tension toward the divine ground.” In a summary passage, he wrote:

. . . this is the language of seeking, searching, and questioning, of ignorance and knowledge concerning the divine ground, of futility, absurdity, anxiety, and alienation of existence, of being moved to seek and question, of being drawn toward the ground, of turning around, of return, illumination, and rebirth (*OH*, vol. 4, pp. 17–18).

The wondering and questioning of the classic philosophers is the beginning of a theophanic event which can fully unfold only if the man who experiences it responds by articulating its dimensions in appropriate language symbols. This chain of events can be likened to a revelatory development in which the noetic structure of the psyche becomes transparent to itself. The precognitive unrest becomes a cognitive consciousness, *noesis*, intending the ground as its *noema*

or *noeton*; the desire to know becomes the consciousness of the object of desire; the ground can be reached through the *via negativa* which points to what is Beyond (*epekeina*, *Republic*, 509b) all limited reality and purposes within the world; it is the One (*to hen*) that is present in all things as their ground and can be identified with wisdom and understanding (*sophia kai nos*, *Philebus* 30c–e) (Walsh, p. 142). In short, the discovery of *nous* symbolizes the noetic experience disclosing the divine ground of being in a manner comparable in detail to the disclosures from the Israelite and Christian horizons (see Sandoz, p. 212).

The illumination of the truth of man's existence as the tension of the human *nous* toward the divine *Nous* made it possible for Plato to articulate the process of reality as a whole. The In-Between which had become luminous as the structure of man's existence could now be seen to be the structure of all things that exist in the In-Between of the One and *apeiron*. The noetic structure implicit in the cosmological symbolism had been differentiated with the discovery of the divine ground as *Nous* and man's consciousness as the site where the In-Between process of reality becomes luminous to itself (see Walsh, p. 142).

The In-Between quality of reality is further illuminated by Plato's insight into reason and the passions in the context of the tension between life and death. In the *Laws*, Plato develops a myth of the puppetplayer who pulls the human puppets by various metal cords, by the golden cord of reason and the lesser cords of the passions. Voegelin referred to this myth as the reality which is experienced as moving beyond its own structure. On man falls the burden of choosing either to engage in the action of immortalizing by following the pull of the divine *Nous* or choosing death by following the counterpull of the passions. Plato symbolizes this experience of the pull (*helkein*) of the Word and the counterpull (*anthelein*) of the worldly temptations in the "true story" (*logos alethes*) of man as the "puppet of the gods" ("Wisdom and the Magic of the Extreme," p. 254). Why is it that man should follow one pull rather than another? Voegelin argued that, by putting the choice unequivocally on man, Plato wants to stress the mystery of the game and the questionable hand the gods have in it—questionable, in that the pull of the other metal cords is just as divine as the pull of the golden cord. The answer is to be found in the philosopher's quest for the truth of existence as a *fides quaerens intellectum*, or faith in search of understanding, requiring clarity concerning both the *fides* and the *intellectus*. In Plato's case, the *fides* has found its symbolic truth in the vision of love as the source of order in reality and by the vision of truth in human existence through participation in the movement of reality toward the divine beyond. The *intellectus* constitutes the noetic action of exploring the structures in a process of reality where order and directions are revealed through the revelation of God's presence ("Wisdom and the Magic of the Extreme," p. 255).

Further refinements in the *metaxy*, necessitated by the differentiation of life and death as the moving forces behind reason and the passions, can be seen in

Plato's *Philebus*. As previously mentioned, Plato symbolized the mystery of being as a meeting ground between the One and the Unlimited. In the differentiated truth of Plato, the One has become the cause (*aitia*) that is present in all things (30b), to be identified with wisdom and mind (30c–e). The Unlimited represents the creative ground (*arche*) that released “things” into being and received them back when they perished, while Time with its ordinance was the limiting pole of existence. Voegelin acknowledged that “behind the passions there is at work the lust of experience in depth (i.e., the injustice on which the law of the cosmos has set the penalty of death in Time)” (“Reason: The Classic Experience,” p. 254).

The conflict between reason and the passions assumes its specific character from the participation of the psyche in the *metaxy*. This is illustrated by a passage that Voegelin quotes from Plato's *Timaeus*:

Now, when a man abandons himself to his desires and ambitions, indulging them incontinently, all his thoughts of necessity become mortal, and as a consequence he must become mortal every bit, as far as that is possible, because he has nourished his mortal part. When on the contrary he has cultivated his love of knowledge and true wisdom, when he has primarily exercised his faculty to think immortal and divine things, he will—since in that manner he is touching truth—become immortal of necessity, as far as it is possible for human nature to participate in immortality (90a–b; quoted in “Reason: The Classic Experience,” p. 255).

To move within the *metaxy*, exploring it in all directions and orienting himself in the perspective granted to man by his position in reality, is the proper task of the philosopher.

CONCLUSION

This paper has illustrated how Voegelin's exposition of Plato's *metaxy* embraces the existential quest for truth and reality. In addition, it considered the development of noetic consciousness as a mode of explaining the significance of the *metaxy* for the experience of the classic philosophers. It now remains to offer some final remarks regarding the historical nexus between the participation of being in the horizon of the *metaxy* and the eclipse of meditative inquiry in the philosophical tradition.

The eclipse of meditation signifies the derailment (*parekbasis*) of the philosopher's articulation of the structures of existential consciousness. The historical component of the meditative process is characterized by Voegelin as the clarification of “the formative center of existence, the *metaxy*,” as well as the protection of this “noetic center against the deformative forces prevalent at the time.” In particular, Voegelin suggested that “a Plato had to see, articulate, and symbolize the Beyond of the cosmos and its gods as the immortal divinity that

drew him irresistibly into the quest and pursuit of the true order of existence” (“Reason: The Classic Experience,” p. 285). Plato’s philosophy of history is illustrative of the experience of immortalizing in the unfolding of rational consciousness and can be reduced to three core components: (1) the In-Between, as the area in which the cosmic process becomes luminous for its meaning; (2) the progression of consciousness to noetic heights as the historical dimension of meaning; and (3) the structures that emerge from this progression of consciousness in the *metaxy* as categories of meaning in history (*OH*, vol. 4, pp. 187–188). Plato uses the term “dialectics” to denote human participation in the metaleptic reality (that is, the reality between apeironic depth and noetic height as it extends into the human psyche). It is the participatory reality in the philosopher’s existential struggle that structures the meditative ascent to the perfection of life in death.

Only if the reality of existential consciousness has been suspended, so that the reality of the movements in the *metaxy* has been eclipsed, can the divine and human poles be hypostatized into autonomous entities. Participatory movements in the *metaxy* may be preempted in one of two ways. First, the experience of transcendence, which lies at the root of the problem and motivates the creation of symbols for its expression, may be abandoned. That is, the symbols of transcendence may be perverted by speculation on immanent problems. The “philodoxer,” according to Voegelin, is one who treats existence as though it were an eternal object. This is the style of the sophistic intellectual.

A second way in which participation in the *metaxy* may be preempted results from the desire for certainty in philosophic speculation—to know whether the thing speculated about really exists and to know it exactly as it is, in a comprehensive and absolute manner. Voegelin warned that there is the danger that man will yield to the temptation to collapse the tension of the participatory reality in the Between and substitute for it a fallacious second reality. In addition, the self-proclaimed second reality reflects the egophanic mode of the closed self, or ego, to the point where it usurps the place of God and opens up false standards for action in the world (Dante Germino, “Eric Voegelin’s Framework for Political Evaluation in His Recently Published Work,” in *Eric Voegelin’s Thought*, pp. 119–123). To illustrate this sort of absolutist claim that attempts to overleap the human condition, Voegelin refers to Plato’s use of the term “eristics,” which contrasts with “dialectics,” or the manner of inquiry represented in the *Philebus* (*Philebus*, 17a; “Reason: The Classic Experience,” p. 256). Eristic thought (the word comes from the Greek word for strife, *eris*) contends that there is only one point of view, its own, and that what is seen from this angle is not in any way a matter of interpretation but the reality itself, known with certainty and stated with finality. By contrast, the person who is conscious of his existence in the *metaxy* explores his real situation in the Between as viewed from various perspectives and as represented in the interpretive models that express them (*Anamnesis*, p. 107).

The noetic constituent of meditation which reveals the *metaxy* as the cognitive center at which reality becomes luminous for truth has not lost meaning for the great problem of the contemporary situation—the pervasive social phenomenon that Voegelin called the “public unconsciousness” (“Wisdom and the Magic of the Extreme,” p. 286). In both *The New Science of Politics and Science, Politics, and Gnosticism*, he took the position that “gnosticism” is the “essence of modernity”; the main thrust of modernity is a despiritualizing process which elevates the external over the internal and immanence over transcendence. The significance of gnosticism for Voegelin’s diagnosis of the spiritual decay and armed ideological dogmas of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries may be briefly summarized.

The “secularization” of the modern West concomitant with the gradual dissipation of the medieval *Christianitas* relegated the spiritual concerns of Christians to the private sphere and “left the field open for a respiritualization of the public sphere from other sources,” for example, nationalism, liberal and socialist versions of “economism,” various biological and reductionist doctrines, and a closed collectivist form of “humanitarian tribalism” (*From Enlightenment to Revolution*, pp. 20–28). More importantly, the classical and Christian understanding of man was fundamentally altered by gnostic forms of thought which claim to have bridged the chasm between essence and existence, immanence and transcendence. According to the gnostic viewpoint, the uncertainties and anxieties which arise from the In-Between quality of natural human existence are resolved by “endowing man and his intramundane range of action with the meaning of eschatological fulfillment.”

In the measure in which this immanentization progressed experientially, civilizational activity became a mystical work of self-salvation. The spiritual strength of the soul which in Christianity was devoted to the sanctification of life could now be diverted into the more appealing, more tangible, and so much easier creation of the terrestrial paradise (*The New Science of Politics: An Introduction*, pp. 124, 129).

According to Voegelin, following its revival by Johannes Scotus Erigena in the ninth century, the gnostic symbolic form manifested itself in the millenarian movements of the later Middle Ages (Joachim of Fiore is the key figure in this development), the radical sects of the Reformation, the “system” constructions of Hobbes and Spinoza, Enlightenment progressivism, Hegelian idealism, Nazi racism, and Marxist communism (see Dante Germino, *Modern Western Political Thought: Machiavelli to Marx* [Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979], p. 14).

Voegelin interpreted this long and complicated secularization process as a tragic saga of experiential contraction and symbolic impoverishment, of failure to see the human form as a unity, a physical and spiritual entity. For example, the progressive thinkers of the French Enlightenment, such as Voltaire, Diderot, and Turgot, “mutilated the idea of man beyond recognition . . . This reduc-

tion of man and his life to the level of utilitarian existence is the symptom of the critical breakdown of Western civilization through the atrophy of intellectual and spiritual substance." In the Positivist movement, beginning in the middle of the eighteenth century, "the term man no longer designates the mature man of the humanist and Christian tradition, but only the crippled, utilitarian fragment" (*From Enlightenment to Revolution*, p. 95). The "normal man" in the modern vocabulary of Western politics is characterized as the immanentist power-seeker of Hobbes, or the pleasure-pain mechanism of the utilitarians, or the "megalomaniac intellectual" of Condorcet and Comte, or Marx's "socialistic man" who asks no metaphysical questions, or Nietzsche's *Übermensch* who extends grace to himself. (Germino, "Eric Voegelin's Framework for Political Evaluation," pp. 129–30; see also Voegelin, *From Enlightenment to Revolution*, pp. 69, 97, 132, 178, 258.) Voegelin wrote that "the modern study of man has become questionable because the revolt against dogmatic obscurantism . . . has not regained the philosopher's noetic experience, but has . . . imposed on the new freedom the heritage of dogmatic form as its own form of truth" ("Epilogue," in *Eric Voegelin's Thought*, p. 200).

The *modus operandi* of reason in the noetic sense is not revolution, violent action, or compulsion, but persuasion, the *peitho* that is central to Plato's philosophy. The philosopher's articulation of concepts appropriate to the illumination of man's participation in a multidimensional reality can yield only a partial perspective, for man cannot step "outside Being" and must base his self-conscious reflection on the experience of participation itself. However, within the limits of his humanity, the philosopher can offer a vision of reality which is not simply private, but which illumines the mystery of existence for anyone who will take the trouble to reenact within his own psyche the experience of participation to which the philosopher's symbols refer (see Dante Germino, "Eric Voegelin: The In-Between of Human Life," in *Contemporary Political Philosophers*, eds. Anthony de Crespigny and Kenneth Minogue [New York: Dodd, Mead and Co., 1975], p. 101).