

interpretation

a journal of political philosophy

volume 3/2,3

winter 1973

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martinus nijhoff, the hague

edited at

queens college of the city university
of new york

interpretation

a journal of political philosophy

volume 3

issue 2,3

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interpretation is a journal devoted to the study of political philosophy.
it appears three times a year.

its editors welcome contributions from all those who take
a serious interest in political philosophy regardless of their orientation.

all manuscripts and editorial correspondence
should be addressed to the executive editor

interpretation

jefferson hall 312 - queens college - flushing, n.y. 11367 - u.s.a.

subscription price

for institutions and libraries Guilders 36.— - for individuals Guilders 28.80
one guilder = ab. \$ 0.37

subscription and correspondence in connection
therewith should be sent to the publisher

martinus nijhoff

9-11 lange voorhout - p.o.b. 269 - the hague - netherlands.

CHRISTIAN AMBIGUITY AND SOCIAL DISORDER

WALTER B. MEAD

It is the argument of this article that much of the social disorder of our time is a direct product of the highly tenuous and ambiguous way in which Christianity and Western philosophy have portrayed man's status in the world and of man's discomfort with this self-concept. It is interesting that twentieth-century philosophers and theologians—Eric Voegelin, J. L. Talmon, Karl Barth, Reinhold Niebuhr, Michael Polanyi, and Karl Popper among them—have not been moved to meliorate in any way the dilemmas and tensions of this traditional world view. If anything, their experiencing and reading of history has led them to emphasize man's tenuous plight, and their admonition seems to be that if order is to be restored to man's life and society he must come to embrace and affirm his ambiguous status, rather than pretend that he can ignore it or define it away, either theologically or technologically. The resolution of current social disorder seems to rest largely upon the question of whether man can measure up to this enormous task.

I

Christianity begins with the assertion that man is an ambiguous creature. Although he is limited and finite by nature, there is a dimension to his being that seems to participate in the Eternal. Even in the midst of his temporal existence, man often experiences the ambivalence of consciousness, vacillating between the immanent and the transcendent, at one time conscious, at another time self-conscious. Sometimes in the midst of his preoccupation with the demands and attractions of the temporal world he catches a glimpse, however vague, of the Eternal. Even in the midst of the moral depravity represented by pride and hatred, he occasionally discovers a more definitive capacity for goodness and love.

In its more classical formulation, what is being suggested is that man is ambiguous in that he is a citizen of two worlds: the *civitas Dei* and the *civitas terrena*. But this dual citizenship is not an equality of citizenship. It is the former that gives ultimate definition to the latter. In other words, that which confirms man's essential being transcends his existence, lies beyond his temporal comprehension,¹ and by nature lies beyond the possi-

¹ Reinhold Niebuhr makes this same point: "Life has a center and source of meaning beyond the natural and social sequences which may be rationally [i.e., formally] discerned. This divine source and center must be discerned by faith because it is enveloped in mystery, though being the basis of meaning. So discerned,

ble accomplishments of temporality or history. His ultimate quest is a quest for the fulfillment represented by this, yet vaguely intimated, eternal dimension, a quest for salvation. In this ultimate fulfillment the temporal creation becomes reconciled with its eternal Creator. In fact, the temporal dimension of man and human society is described by Eric Voegelin as "that part of human nature that will pass away with the transfiguration of time into eternity."² Only then does man come to the end of the most ultimate of all his quests, indeed, to the end of his only eternal quest and pilgrimage. Augustine gave apt expression to this quest when he said: "Thou has made us for Thyself, and our spirits are restless until they rest in Thee."³ It is a fulfillment that lies beyond history and that can come only through grace, and not, ultimately, by any effort, intention, or action of man.⁴

But there is another kind of quest in which man by nature is involved, which although also a perennial quest must not be confused with his quest for salvation. Within man's strictly temporal existence he finds himself confronted with another dichotomous awareness of, on the one hand, his incompleteness and, on the other hand, the desire for fulfillment. It has no relation to the fulfillment of salvation except perhaps, in some cases, as a *response* to the assurance of salvation,⁵ perhaps even, by *analogia fidei*, a temporal anticipation of that ultimate fulfillment.⁶ Man feels the pangs of hunger; therefore he seeks the "satisfaction" of food. His sex drive leads him to seek the satisfaction that comes from the "consummation" of the sex act. He feels his incompleteness in isolation; therefore, he forms communities that bring him a relative sense of "fulfillment." Man is distressed by ugliness and finds "harmony" in works of art. He is inconvenienced by the more primitive states of existence, so he develops highly sophisticated technological societies. He is disturbed by phenomena that he cannot understand, and so he seeks ever to enlarge his knowledge.⁷

it yields a frame of meaning in which human freedom is real and valid and not merely tragic or illusory." *The Irony of American History* (New York: Scribner's, 1952), p. 168.

² Eric Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), p. 109.

³ *Confessions*, Bk. I, ch. 1.

⁴ Glenn Tinder, *The Crisis of Political Imagination* (New York: Scribner's, 1964), p. 188: "The first step in the quest for being is the discovery that the world does not satisfy this quest."

⁵ The reference here is to the "response ethic" of H. Richard Niebuhr. See his *Radical Monotheism and Western Culture, with Supplementary Essays* (New York: Harper, 1943), and his *The Responsible Self: An Essay in Christian Moral Philosophy* (New York: Harper, 1963).

⁶ Karl Barth suggests such an analogy in his *Church Dogmatics* (12 vols.; Edinburgh: T. and T. Clark, 1936-1962). We shall explain it shortly.

⁷ Michael Polanyi suggests that "the satisfaction of gaining intellectual control over the external world is linked to a satisfaction of gaining control over ourselves."

In every one of these situations man seeks to move from a condition of relative unfulfillment to relative fulfillment. His temporal satisfactions are never complete and always transitory. He feeds himself to satisfaction today but finds himself hungry again tomorrow. The aesthete no sooner finds a work of art unsurpassed in beauty than he continues on his quest for even greater beauty. Today we find tranquility, tomorrow the unexpected rudely intrudes upon our ordered lives. J. L. Talmon reminds us: "We must accept the truth that human society and human life can never reach a state of repose . . . Life is a perpetual and never resolved crisis. All that can be done is to proceed by the method of trial and error."⁸ In the same spirit, Reinhold Niebuhr defines democracy as "a method of finding proximate solutions for insoluble problems."⁹ Even the logician and the philosopher must allow for the possibility of their entire frameworks of thought being successfully challenged. Even their "universals," although they may probe behind the *doxa* of existence and partake of "objective reality," usually by *analogia entis* tie themselves to the objectivity of the creation rather than of the Creator.¹⁰ Temporal truth can never completely encompass even temporal reality, for temporal reality can be seen in its objectivity and completeness only from the direction of the transcendent, the Eternal. The quest for temporal fulfillment is a legitimate one, indeed, we might say ethically compelling, as long as it is seen as a *relative* quest, one that is not confused with the ultimate quest for salvation, or even with the means toward this ultimate quest. For the means toward man's salvation, as we have observed, is strictly the grace or action of God; whereas the means toward man's temporal fulfillment must be seen to be largely his own—even if only his own *response* to grace.

Central among man's temporal quests is his quest for knowledge. Of course, this particular quest cannot be disrelated from other of man's searchings, many of which are not, strictly speaking, heuristic or intellectual, but all of which—for example, his quest for community—necessarily reflect, in both the nature of their objectives and the manner in which they are sought, something of his understanding of himself and his world.¹¹ After all, man is in the broadest sense a satisfaction-seeking animal, and therefore only in the broadest sense also a problem-solving animal. But the point I wish to emphasize at present is that man is inherently curious,

Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy (New York: Harper and Row, 1958), p. 196.

⁸ J. L. Talmon, *The Origins of Totalitarian Democracy* (New York: Praeger, 1960), pp. 254-55.

⁹ *The Children of Light and the Children of Darkness: A Vindication of Democracy and a Critique of Its Traditional Defense* (New York: Scribner's, 1944), p. 118.

¹⁰ This is essentially the Barthian critique of philosophy.

¹¹ Voegelin emphasizes the significance of man's various quests for community in his *The New Science of Politics*.

that he wishes to make sense of his surroundings.¹² This aspect of his problem-solving nature is partly manifested in his universal appreciation, even throughout his adult life, of play and adventure. Michael Polanyi suggests that our gigantic amusement industry indicates the enjoyment we derive from the popular forms of solving puzzles. Hegel depicts the more philosophical dimension of man's problem-solving quest as the "spirit's insatiable" cognitive appropriation of the objective world within the "receptacle of self."¹³ But neither Hegel nor Polanyi limit this process of cognitive appropriation to formal systems of knowledge. In fact, the essence of cognitive discovery for Polanyi (although not for Hegel) is nonformalistic. Music emerges for both as one of the most profound and satisfying forms of understanding. Thus Polanyi asserts that "like mathematics, music articulates a vast range of rational relationships for the mere pleasure of understanding them."¹⁴ In man's persistent quest to come to terms with himself and his world, he articulates himself in a vast array of cultural forms, some of them verbal, some graphic, some musical, some symbolic and mystical.

Although I have indicated that the temporal quests of man must not be confused with his soteriological quest, and that the present relative fulfillments of the one have no inherent relationship to the eventual complete consummation of the other, this does not mean that some kind of relevance does not exist between the two quests. I have already noted that the *civitas Dei* gives ultimate definition and meaning to the *civitas terrena*. Through faith man is given an anticipation of the *civitas Dei* and an assurance that his soteriological quest will not go unfulfilled. Thus even his temporal endeavors, destined to incompleteness, are given, in faith, new meaning and definition. But even the ultimate assurances of faith remain temporally unfulfilled. The distinction between the two realms is essential. Voegelin is emphatic on this point: "Faith is the anticipation of a supernatural perfection of man; it is not this perfection itself. The realm of God is not of this world; and the representative of the *civitas Dei* in history, the church, is not a substitute for civil society"¹⁵ The two quests result in the articulation of two different experiences. But both experiences are legitimate. The two realms represent two different truths. But both are truths. When Christianity, with its epochal differentiation of the two realms, superseded polytheism, it did not, Voegelin reminds us, "abolish

¹² Polanyi, in fact, does not see man as unique in this respect from the rest of the animal kingdom except in degree. "The animal's intelligence is spontaneously alive to the problem of making sense of its surroundings." (*Personal Knowledge*, p. 98.)

¹³ Robert Tucker, *Philosophy and Myth in Karl Marx* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1961), pp. 141, 143, 213-14.

¹⁴ *Personal Knowledge*, p. 193. See Milton Rokeach, *The Open and Closed Mind: Investigations into the Nature of Belief Systems and Personality Systems* (New York: Basic Books, 1960), ch. 15: "The Enjoyment of New Musical Systems."

¹⁵ Voegelin, *New Science*, pp. 157-58.

the need of a civil theology."¹⁶ Civil society must represent man in his existential dimension, as finite man and as part of a finite cosmos or creation. Thus, even "the power organization of society," according to Voegelin, is valid "as a temporal representation of that part of human nature that will pass away" at the end of time.¹⁷ The role of the church, on the other hand, is to represent man to himself in the context of his soteriological dimension, his eternal destiny in the *civitas Dei*.

Yet, inasmuch as the same man whose destiny is in the *civitas Dei* is also a citizen of the temporal world, and inasmuch as his endeavors in the temporal world receive new meaning because of his destiny, the two realms, although distinct, must not be seen as completely separate. The Augustinian portrayal suggests an "overlapping" of the two realms. Therefore, neither can the roles of the *representatives* of these two realms, church and state, be completely isolated from each other.¹⁸

But the "overlapping," as I shall shortly indicate, represents a confrontation of two realms that are radically different in kind. Their meeting is probably more aptly described as disjunctive rather than complementary. Central to Karl Barth's theology is his insistence that all of man's attempts to capture a vision of the *civitas Dei* with analogies drawn from our temporal world fail us. Barth does allow, however, that through grace and in faith we are afforded glimpses of certain eternal and transcendent truths (in his terms "revelation," in Polanyi's terms "heuristic intimations" of the transcendent),¹⁹ and if we apply these at least partially grasped revelatory

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 158. This differentiation was not made clear until Augustine, when, according to Voegelin, "the one Christian society was articulated into its spiritual and temporal order." *New Science*, p. 109.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

¹⁸ Implied, but not elaborated upon, in Augustine's writings, of course, is a complex doctrine of church and state that takes us beyond the scope of this study. Augustine's doctrine of two realms is more specifically spelled out in terms of its institutional implications in the writings of Gelasius (*Tractatus*) and John of Paris (*De potestate regia et papali*), who agree that the church, as representative of the *civitas Dei*, and civil authority must each acknowledge the legitimacy of the other and work, each in its own way but cooperatively, on matters of common moral concern. Walter Lippmann provides a balanced contemporary expression of this concern for distinction but confrontation in church and state relations: "on the one hand, the two realms cannot be fused and . . . on the other hand, they cannot be separated and isolated . . . They must be related by striking, maintaining, redressing a balance between them . . . Neither must be allowed to . . . absorb the other . . . They cannot be isolated and insulated in different compartments . . . The state and the churches should each be too strong to be conquered, not strong enough to have unlimited dominion . . . Church and state need to be separate, autonomous, and secure. But they must also meet on all the issues of good and evil." *The Public Philosophy* (New York: Mentor, 1956), pp. 118-19.

¹⁹ It is most interesting to observe that both Polanyi, in his emphasis upon anticipation and his discounting of "logical antecedents," and Barth, in his emphasis

insights to our temporal existence by the “analogy of faith” (which he contrasts to the Thomistic “analogy of things”), we are then able to see ourselves and our relations in the dimension of God’s intention for us, our ultimate destiny. Thus, we can approach a true understanding of “Fatherhood” only as we see it first in God’s relation to man, not by seeing it first as it is manifested in the human relationships between father and son. But when we apply, by *analogia fidei*, the understanding we are given of the divine Fatherhood to the human relationship, the categories do not fit. Our vision confirms us in what we are in our fulfillment (or salvation) and, in the mind of God, a fulfillment that is already given, but that is not yet *received* except as a “foretaste,” and that awaits its consummation at the end of history.

Thus the vision of faith does enable us to see ourselves in a new light, a light by which we are both judged and assured. Only through the vision of faith, whereby we are made acutely aware of the radical difference between the two kingdoms we inhabit, one in transit and the other in anticipation, are we able to give proper perspective and assign ultimately true meaning to ourselves and our societies. When we see ourselves in our created finitude, we are able to avoid many of the common and dangerous self-deceptions of society. But as temporal beings we can but imperfectly appropriate the vision that is given us in faith, and as the vision of another order its meaning remains ultimate, is not altogether clear to us. Furthermore, where we are able to sense its message, it often challenges and contradicts the understanding we have derived from our temporal quests. The wisdom of faith answers us in our soteriological quest, and in our temporal quests provides us with perspective but no answers. Walter Lippmann makes the same point succinctly: “Nor does the wisdom of the spirit solve precisely the perplexing problems of worldly conduct. For it is the vision of a realm of being in which the problems of earthly existence are not solved but transcended.”²⁰ Thus the Christian faith summons us to love one another, but what this implies in a world where nations and corporations, not just individuals, confront each other, where countless numbers are in various and indirect ways affected by our actions, and where choices are not simply between loving and not loving, is not immediately clear. We are told that we *all* stand under the judgment of God and that we should keep this in mind when we judge others. But we are not told how to judge justly.

II

It might appear that there are inevitable contradictions involved in our attempt to encompass elements of Polanyi’s epistemological world view within Barth’s basic theological world view. Polanyi, after all, assumes

upon revelation and his discounting of knowledge unaided by grace, are amenable to interpretation in terms of the concept of *analogia fidei*.

²⁰ *Public Philosophy*, p. 113.

that man is able to relate fairly compatibly, through intimation and discovery, to his heuristic universe. Barth, on the other hand, sees man in his own efforts to "go it alone," even in the fiduciary realm of philosophy, constantly contradicted by the transcendent and revelatory truth of God. Neither Polanyi nor Barth appears interested enough in the other's concerns to enter into dialogue with the other. But a reconciliation of the two, in their basic concerns, is not impossible. We do not violate Polanyi's understanding of the heuristic universe if we include in it the temporal, created universe—the *civitas terrena*. There is certainly enough room within this largely mysterious universe of ours to allow for an exercise of faith, or fiduciary commitment, that has as its object truths that themselves are part of man's temporal order, but not yet discovered by him.²¹ Not all fiduciary commitments are based upon intimations of truths that will always evade man's finite ability to comprehend, and many of those truths that do thus persistently evade temporal man are nevertheless a part of the vast temporal creation, while no less objective and universal from man's temporal perspective. A truth cannot be assumed to be transcendent and eternal, i.e., to partake of the Divine, merely because it is a universal characteristic of the created universe. Platonic philosophy is particularly subject to this fallacy of equating universalism with transcendence. Of course there are some fiduciary commitments that are based upon intimations of transcendent and eternal truths. These, by their very nature, are the least subjectable to temporal assessment and will always evade complete temporal comprehension; they are what we generally refer to as spiritual or religious truths. Polanyi acknowledges this characteristic of religious truth: "The indwelling of the Christian worshipper . . . resembles . . . the heuristic upsurge which strives to break through the accepted frameworks of thought, guided by the intimations of discoveries still beyond our horizon. Christian worship sustains, as it were, an eternal, never [temporally] to be consummated hunch . . ." ²²

Barth seems to allow relatively more clarity to religious truths; he would not settle for referring to them as "hunches." But, Barth concedes, we still do not see "face to face." A more important concern is that, for Barth, the spiritual wisdom we are allowed is purely a gift of grace. In matters of spiritual truth he does not allow for Polanyi's confirmation by heuristic dialectic. Barth seems to say that man's own temporal heuristic categories are absolutely incompatible for receiving the kerygma, and man's cognitive faculty is transformed by grace in the moment that, by grace, spiritual

²¹ Polanyi describes a problem as "a conception of something we are striving for. It is an intellectual desire for crossing a logical gap on the other side of which lies the unknown, fully marked out by our conception of it, though as yet never seen in itself. The search for a solution consists in casting about with this purpose in mind." *Personal Knowledge*, p. 128.

²² *Personal Knowledge*, p. 199.

truth is presented to him, so that he can receive it. There are certainly problems presented by this thesis. One of the most common criticisms of Barth is that he neglects the question of how, if man's cognitive temporality has to be transformed in order to receive spiritual truth, we can say that it is still man that receives this truth. It does not appear altogether satisfactory, to these critics, to answer that, in the transformation by grace, we are speaking merely of a new man, the "new Adam," but still a man—since "non-temporal man" (or "trans-temporal man") is a concept that strikes them as a contradiction in terms. But then, too, the Christian tradition has always spoken of man as surviving death, surviving temporality. There is an immortal dimension to man that need not violate his finitude.

Even when Voegelin speaks of the "transparency" of the soul that allows man to reflect in his own being a dimension of the Eternal and suggests, furthermore, that man's soul "comes into being," i.e., man partakes of immortality, in that moment, he expressly disregards the problem of grace.²³ So, at first it may appear that grace is of no real significance in his world view. But in another source we find Voegelin saying: "Man will be in the truth of his existence when he has opened his psyche to the truth of God: and the truth of God will become manifest in history *when it has formed the psyche of man into receptivity for the unseen measure.*"²⁴ It becomes clear, then, that Voegelin, while relying upon man's own initiative, acknowledges also the role of grace in the Divine-human encounter.

Although Polanyi nowhere appears to give specific consideration to the question of grace in defining his epistemology, the assumption of a doctrine of grace, in fact, pervades his system. Indeed, the argument might well be made that this assumption is more integral to Polanyi's thought than it is to Voegelin's. Not only is man, for Polanyi, an active agent in the heuristic quest, but he is "pulled" on in his quest by the object of his faith. In other words, there is a dialectic of forces within the heuristic field, quite apart from the formal dialectic that later "confirms" him in his commitments. Also, Polanyi even admits that man's specifically spiritual insights are not subject to temporal "consummation." Although he does not elaborate on this point, it might well be interpreted as an acknowledgment of the inadequacy of formal cognitive dialectic for providing confirmation in these instances. Furthermore, Polanyi makes clear, as we have indicated, that on rare occasions the intuitive heuristic insights or anticipations that man acquires for "unspecifiable reasons" (grace?) occasionally force a basic alteration of his heuristic categories, i.e., challenge all of his previous commitments. Is this not precisely Barth's own doctrine of revelation (apart from the latter's exclusively biblical orientation) and of the radical

²³ "Ersatz Religion: The Gnostic Mass Movements of Our Time," *Politeia* (Somerset, N. J.), I, 2 (Spring, 1964), p. 11. The article is translated by Helen Lee Hunter Douglass from *Wort und Wahrheit*, XV (1960), pp. 5-18.

²⁴ *New Science*, p. 69. Italics mine.

distinction of the two realms? Barth could well endorse Polanyi's epistemology, and Polanyi, Barth's theological categories.

But the fact is that Polanyi has little to say specifically about Barth's soteriological concerns and Barth gives relatively little thought to the temporal realm as such. Therefore, in light of what each does have to say, there appears to be no reason to assume that the basic tenets of Polanyi's epistemology preclude a simultaneous embracing of Barth's radical distinction between the two realms.

We have already established that many of the truths that indefinitely evade man's finite ability to comprehend are nevertheless temporal in nature. Barth's understanding of the accessibility to man, through grace and in faith, of certain eternal truths, on the other hand, suggests that some of the truths of which man is given at least a glimpse are nevertheless transcendent in nature. Both of these acknowledgments force us to the conclusion that although we may be given to know, intuitively or otherwise, which of those truths we comprehend (of course, always ultimately through fiduciary affirmations) are by their nature temporal and which soteriological or eternal, beyond this we have no way of knowing precisely where the line is to be drawn between the two realms. Since there is much that eludes us, both of our temporal realm and of the Eternal, we cannot give final definition to either realm.

Still, what we do know of these two realms indicates to us that the *civitas Dei* and the *civitas terrena* are not congruent, and although in a sense tangential,²⁵ ultimately do not even coincide.²⁶ In other words, history, even if we could conceive of its extension into infinity, can in no way be said to be thereby transformed into the Eternal. Its nature remains temporal. Man as immanent, historical being is not only denied an apprehension of the Eternal except through faith, but he is also denied an apprehension of history as a whole. For not only does its end lie in the future, but its order can have meaning only in the context of its ultimate confirmation and consummation in the Eternal. Only when man can be separate from history, i.e., only at the end of history, can he look back upon it in its entirety. Thus Voegelin asserts: "History as a whole is essentially not an object of cognition, the meaning of the whole is not

²⁵ The Christian concept of Kairos represents the Eternal as "making contact" with the temporal and historical. The Barthian theology, as I have indicated, emphasizes this idea.

²⁶ As I have already noted, the Augustinian concept of the two realms does seem to imply an "overlapping" or coinciding of the two realms, but only in the sense that salvation does manifest itself temporally in terms of sanctification; this does not mean, even for Augustine, temporal perfection. The man of faith is a member of the same invisible church that includes the angels and the saints; but, Augustine agrees, this does not confer upon him sainthood or membership in the angelic ranks.

discernable.”²⁷ And in another source he says: “Only the order of an existing society is intelligible; its existence itself is unintelligible.”²⁸

The main point that I wish to make is that in order to represent true order in his own life and society, man must affirm in faith the reality of that which sometimes temporarily, sometimes indefinitely, eludes him as a temporal being. It is important that man acknowledge the elusive and radical “otherness” of this reality while affirming it, and not make the mistake of thinking that temporality can be interpreted, or temporal problems solved, in terms of the ultimate and absolute categories of religious affirmation. Furthermore, it is essential that man similarly be able to recognize the incompleteness and ambivalence of his *temporal* truths while embracing them in the context of fiduciary commitments. To fail to have this perspective, provided most completely by the Christian faith—i.e., to deny the reality of a transcendent realm, or to see it as congruent with the temporal, and thereby to fail to see the inconsistencies and finitude of temporality, or to view all of temporal existence as relative and unwarranting of any kind of affirmation—inevitably spells disorder. Whether or not, then, this means that apart from the full perspective of faith man is doomed in his endeavors and social institutions to self-destruction or the breakdown of those institutions because of this disorder, is a question that does not suggest a simple or an immediate answer. For the disorder of which I speak is a *spiritual* disorder. It is a disorder that manifests itself in man’s denial to himself of the fulfillment that is available to him by his affirmation of reality. Rather he chooses to deny reality, to ignore “the constitution of being.” The phrase is Voegelin’s:

The will to power of the Gnostic who wants to rule the world has triumphed over the humility of subordination to the constitution of being . . . Yet the result of victory is not really the acquisition of power. The constitution of being remains what it is . . . The result therefore, is not dominion over being, but a fantasy satisfaction.²⁹

Voegelin apparently feels that the distortion of faith represented by gnosticism cannot enhance social stability. In his *The New Science of Politics* he goes further to suggest that gnosticism inevitably undermines the practical functioning or the survival of the society in which it manifests itself.³⁰ Without attempting, within the scope of this paper, to take up these questions, I merely suggest for the present that neither of these points is at all self-evident if we assume a real autonomy of the two realms.

The central truth of the Christian faith is the unqualified and redemptive love of God for man, i.e., the fact of man’s salvation, his reconciliation

²⁷ “Ersatz Religion,” p. 10.

²⁸ *New Science*, p. 167.

²⁹ “Ersatz Religion,” p. 11.

³⁰ Ch. 6: “The End of Modernity.”

with God. It is an eternal fact that offers itself as an answer to man's soteriological quest and, in fact, exists even prior to this quest. With its apprehension in faith, temporal man is assured that his soteriological quest, although its fulfillment awaits him in Eternity, has ended. As the most ultimate of all "givens," it is the most intuitive and least derived of man's commitments, bordering itself on the "unspecifiable" that provides the context for all of man's "tacit assents." In this sense, this central truth might well be referred to as underived, a pure gift of grace that is prior to man's even most unspecifiable ratiocinations. In being confronted with this truth, man knows in faith that his one most ultimate question has been answered and that he is given no further cause for *ultimate* concern. Although his penultimate concerns are not, in themselves, thereby answered, he is himself afforded, in addressing himself to these concerns, a context of solace and assurance to the extent that the transcending vision of this faith does not elude him—or he does not elude it.

III

Here we come to the crux of the problem. The vision of the Christian faith, if it were something that did not, by transcending man's temporal sphere, lie beyond the clear comprehension of his formal categories, and did not at the same time confront man in his realm as something alien to his temporal commitments, would present no problems to man's ordering his life and his society in a way consonant with this transcendent vision of assurance. But such is not the nature of the Christian faith. It is, in its very nature, both transcendent and alien and, therefore, both elusive and problematic. Ever since man made the epochal differentiation between the *civitas Dei* and the *civitas terrena*, "both types of truth," according to Voegelin, the temporal and the eternal, "will . . . exist together; and the tension between the two in various degrees of consciousness, will be a permanent structure of civilization."³¹

By the "elusive" nature of faith, I mean its intangible nature. The Old and the New Testaments speak recurringly of the "hiddenness" of God. In the twelfth verse of the thirteenth chapter of I Corinthians we are told that even in faith "we see only puzzling reflections in a mirror."³² In Hebrews, the eleventh chapter, first verse, we are told that "faith gives substance to our hopes and makes us certain of realities we do not see."³³ Voegelin concludes that the "thread of faith, on which hangs all certainty

³¹ *New Science*, p. 158. Glenn Tinder expresses the same thought when he says that the achievement of the separation of church and state "means the conscious acceptance of division and uncertainty in collective existence." *Political Imagination*, p. 312.

³² *The New English Bible*.

³³ *Ibid.*

regarding transcendent, divine being, is indeed very thin. Man is given nothing tangible. The substance and proof of the unseen are ascertained through nothing but faith . . .”³⁴ Certainly Polanyi would not use the phrase “nothing but faith,” for faith represents, to him, more certainty than so-called tangible or empirical “certainties,” the latter being, as I have observed, derived from the former. Voegelin would probably not disagree with Polanyi on this matter, but he does express by this phrase the manner in which faith is generally viewed. In any case, both acknowledge the frustrating lack of clarity in which we are given to view the basic certainties of the Christian faith.

Even though the Christian faith denies us the clarity of detail, there is no denying its central thrust. Through what Voegelin would refer to as the “transparency” (probably “translucence” would be better in terms of the idiom and spirit of I Corinthians 13) of the “differentiated” soul, we are given a vision of not only *another* realm, but of a *radically different* realm. The givenness of God’s love and acceptance of man does not cancel out God’s sometimes unfathomable commands and judgments upon man. The same God who loved Abraham and his descendants tested Abraham by ordering him to kill his son. The same God who, in love for his creation, sent His own son into the world, permitted his crucifixion. Thus all men are subject to divine imperatives that may insist upon the denial of certain highly treasured temporal values and aspirations, even upon the forfeiture of temporal life itself. There is no comfort offered in the reflection that “as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are God’s ways higher than man’s ways,” or that the peace of God is of a kind that “passes all understanding.”³⁵ The radical directives of the Christian faith are not made easy, but all the more difficult, to bear by the sensitivity of the Christian who

³⁴ “Ersatz Religion,” p. 11. Reinhold Niebuhr seems to express the same thought when he says that “the God before whom ‘the nations are as a drop in the bucket and are counted as small dust in the balances’ is known *by faith and not by reason.*” (Emphasis mine.) Unfortunately this last phrase, which is not uncharacteristic of Niebuhr’s expression in various of his writings, encourages an interpretation of Niebuhr’s understanding of faith and reason as very dichotomous. If, however, we understand Niebuhr’s use of “reason” to mean *formal*, or *logical*, or *systematic* forms of reason, I think it is possible to understand Niebuhr’s concept of faith in a way that is less alien to reason more generally, and less formally, understood. In other words, there is no reason that Niebuhr could not embrace Polanyi’s understanding of the relationship between reason and faith. In fact, such an interpretation of Niebuhr is suggested by the sentences that follow immediately upon the one I have just quoted: “The realm of mystery and meaning which encloses and finally makes sense out of the baffling configurations of history is not identical with any *scheme* of rational intelligibility. The faith which appropriates the meaning in the mystery inevitably involves an experience of repentance for the false meaning which the pride of nations and cultures introduces into the pattern. Such repentance is the true source of charity” (Emphasis mine.) *Irony of American History*, p. 150.

³⁵ Isa. 55:9 and Phil. 4:7.

holds that faith. For to the degree that one sees through the eyes of faith, one sees himself, in large part, alien to the dominating assumptions of his society. Voegelin observes that "what made Christianity so dangerous was its uncompromising, radical de-divinization of the world."³⁶ As one who has glimpsed the vision of another world, the Christian is alien to his own world: still *in* the world, but no longer *of* it. He finds himself, in one sense, a man without a country; in another sense, he finds that he holds dual and conflicting citizenships.

Although the Christian faith, as we have indicated, affords man a sense of meaning and selfhood that surpasses all more tangible commitments and offers to society the proper perspective of humanity in its created finitude, and thereby enables it to avoid many of its common and dangerous self-deceptions, these gains in meaning and perspective are not without certain ambiguities, permanent tensions, and judgments that are awesomely burdensome for even the strongest in faith. For even they do not fail to see the contrasting attractions of those competing temporal commitments that offer man, if lesser, more immediate, more tangible, less ambiguous and less burdensome gratification.

For Voegelin the insecurity, the tension, the temptation to view reality in terms of a monistic temporal sphere in disregard of an elusive and problematic transcendent realm is strictly a spiritual problem, a problem of religious faith, especially of the Christian faith. "The temptation to fall from uncertain truth into certain untruth is stronger in the clarity of the Christian faith than in other spiritual structures."³⁷ Even the attempt to resolve the problem manifests itself—at least in those instances where Voegelin is most concerned—as a spiritual and Christian form of heresy, or gnosticism, and therefore does not implicitly represent a rejection of Christianity, but a perversion of it.³⁸

Polanyi adds considerably to our understanding of the problem of man's anxiety and alienation by demonstrating that even man's strictly temporal heuristic endeavors are based upon fiduciary commitments that, in their very nature and in their very potential for creativity and discovery, are elusive and problematic. However, when we now speak of the *temporal* exercise of faith, its elusiveness is not, at least immediately, based upon its focus upon a transcendent realm, and its problematic nature does not derive

³⁶ *New Science*, p. 100.

³⁷ "Ersatz Religion," p. 12. To be consistent with Polanyi's description of man's most basic and certain assumptions as "unspecifiable" and with reference to I Corinthians 13:12, I would prefer to rephrase this statement of Voegelin's to read: "The temptation to fall from *unclear* truth into *clear* untruths is stronger in the *certainty* of the Christian faith . . ."

³⁸ Voegelin does suggest that as Christian heresy runs its course, gnosticism eventually in its secular forms (as in Marxism) expresses an outright rejection of Christianity. But we must not confuse explicit rejection with an implicit retention of, redefined, Christian ideals, such as perfection, equality, etc.

from the alien nature of the transcendent. Rather, the elusiveness of temporal truths derives from the initial lack of clarity that, as we have seen, characterizes all heuristic discovery and their problematic nature lies in the fact that these new discoveries threaten a re-evaluation of our previous commitments and world views. But what Polanyi contributes here by no means represents a *contradiction* of Voegelin's concern with spiritual, or transcendent, truth and its perennial tensions. In fact, Polanyi concedes that it is in the experience of Christian worship that the heuristic tension reaches its most intense and sustained form:

The dwelling of the Christian worshipper within the ritual of divine service differs from any other dwelling within a framework of inherent excellence, by the fact that this indwelling is not enjoyed. The confession of guilt, the surrender to God's mercy, the prayer for grace, the praise of God, bring about mounting tension. By these ritual acts the worshipper accepts the obligation to achieve what he knows to be beyond his own unaided powers and strives towards it in the hope of a merciful visitation from above.

. . . Christian worship sustains, as it were, an eternal, never to be consummated hunch . . . It is like an obsession with a problem known to be insoluble, which yet follows, against reason, unswervingly, the heuristic command: "Look at the unknown!"³⁹

But, having said this, Polanyi focuses most of his attention upon the more extensive and strictly temporal aspects of the heuristic endeavor. In turning from the emphasis of Voegelin to that of Polanyi, we are reminded, therefore, that man's alienation and cognitive confusion, although ultimately rooted in the elusiveness and the problematic nature of the soteriological quest, are augmented by the inherent elusiveness and problematic nature of his strictly, and sometimes proper, temporal quests. Decision making, for example, is not easy. It requires a difficult evaluation of many, oftentimes "unspecifiable," considerations, an anticipation of, usually indeterminate and far-reaching, possibly radical, consequences; and when the decision is finally made, it is made in the awareness that that decision precludes an infinite range of other possibilities. Thus the heuristic process is, for Polanyi, an "irreversible" process. Certain commitments, certain forms of existence, once regarded as possibilities, even as "truths," in the light of new considerations, experiences, and commitments, can never again be considered as such. Nor can newly discovered problems, of which society was once "blissfully oblivious," ever again be disregarded. In fact, as knowledge becomes more extensive, in many respects it becomes more problematic; decisions that were once "self-evident" are no longer so; one is forced to consider other alternatives, themselves problematic. Thus, J. L. Talmon observes that "infirm man has not been relieved by the working of the totality from the agonizing burden of choosing alternatives.

³⁹ *Personal Knowledge*, pp. 198-99.

If anything, the conquests of scientific rationality are constantly underlining the ambivalent nature of the world of objects."⁴⁰

If this is true of the world of objects inanimate, it is certainly no less true of personal existence. Richard Niebuhr's awareness of the highly ambiguous and problematic nature of man and the difficult decisions that confront man in his interpersonal and intersocietal relations led Niebuhr to an ethics that reflected his sensitivity to the dangers and irrelevancies of "neat" and categorical answers. James Gustafson, in his introduction to Richard Niebuhr's posthumously published *The Responsible Self: An Essay in Christian Moral Philosophy*, describes Niebuhr's understanding of ethics:

[Ethics] does not give us an unequivocal rank-order of values to be sought in some universal order of preference to each other. It does not plot out the design for the ideal society in which all the tensions and ambiguities of social and moral incoherence are brought into a harmonious, beautiful whole. Rather, it clarifies our understanding of moral existence through its analysis and in turn enables us to be more responsible selves in the social world.

For Niebuhr, then, it is perhaps more accurate to speak of an indirect effect of ethical analysis upon moral life and action, than of an immediate and direct one. Ethics helps us to understand ourselves as responsible beings, our world as the place in which the responsible existence of the human community is exercised. Its practical utility is in its clarification, its interpretation, its provision of a pattern of meaning and understanding in the light of which human action can be more responsible.⁴¹

The responsible self, then, is one who begins with an acknowledgment of the ambivalent and enigmatic way in which he is confronted with the totality of his existence and with an affirmation of whatever this entails. In Karl Popper's words: "For those who have eaten of the tree of knowledge, paradise is lost."⁴² The "paradise," of course, that he refers to is a primitive "paradise" of "blissful" ignorance.

Also, built into the heuristic process, as Polanyi describes it, is an inherent ambiguity and tension between the new gains in knowledge represented by one's fiduciary commitments and the, at least initial, lack of formal clarity that is characteristic of these new gains.⁴³ Because cognitive certainty is a product of both the formal clarity and the substantive sufficiency or comprehensiveness of our knowledge, and since neither is entirely separable from the other, it is naturally difficult to choose among

⁴⁰ *Political Messianism* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1960), p. 517.

⁴¹ (New York: Harper and Row, 1963), p. 18.

⁴² Karl Popper, *The Open Society and Its Enemies* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1963), I, 199.

⁴³ Gains in the way of heuristic discovery, I might suggest, at least initially, are purchased at the cost of formal clarity. Aristotle rightly suggests that the complexity and changeability of the actual world in some instances makes lack of clarity a persistent characteristic of our knowledge. We shall never find "the right rule," says Aristotle, if we look for more "clearness" than "the subject matter admits of." *Nicomachean Ethics*, Bk. I, ch. II, 1904b 12.

alternatives when these alternatives represent different mixtures of the two. Alternatives then become incommensurable. It is, therefore, to be expected that even in the normal course of cognitive activity one must experience a certain degree of ambivalence and indecision.

IV

Both in the case of individuals and of societies advancement through change, i.e., the risking of new commitments and the abandonment of old, is the very essence of growth and maturity. The attempt to stand still, to cling to the security of old commitments, institutions, and shibboleths, can result only in regression and disintegration, social and individual.⁴⁴ Thus Erich Fromm tells us that the new-born infant finds himself in an alien world.⁴⁵ As he establishes his primary bonds, he acquires a sense of orientation and security. But as he grows and as he is made aware of a larger world, he must relinquish old commitments and venture forth on new ones if he is to maintain a balanced and healthy relationship to his ever broadening environment and if he is to find fulfillment as a mature adult. Fromm reminds us that the process of maturation is a lonely one, but that any attempt to escape the hazards of this lonely venture by trying to re-establish primary bonds, or by trying to return to the primitive satisfaction and security of the prenatal state, can only be a futile attempt culminating in frustration, hostility, and loss of selfhood. The road to individual maturity and responsibility, whether we are speaking in emotional or cognitive terms, can only be a difficult and a hazardous one. Even when we accept these hazards (and Fromm seems to overlook this point), we must realize that the fulfillment that awaits us in this world remains incomplete. Glenn Tinder appears to have the same thing in mind when he warns us that "the first step in the quest for being is the discovery that the world does not satisfy this quest."⁴⁶

After describing this lonely and arduous task of the individual in his quest for selfhood and maturity, Fromm suggests that an analogous process marks the evolution of societies throughout history. We are reminded of the thesis that every biology student learns in his introduction to embryology: "Ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny." The most crucial period of historical transition, for Fromm, appears to be at the end of the middle ages. The primary ties represented by vocation, class, and religion in the feudal period were torn asunder by the advent of the Enlightenment,

⁴⁴ Reinhold Niebuhr observes: "It is no more possible for a mature and highly elaborated community to return to the unity of its tribal simplicity than for a mature man to escape the perils of maturity by a return to childhood." *Children of Light*, p. 123.

⁴⁵ *Escape from Freedom* (New York: Rinehart, 1941), ch. 2: "The Emergence of the Individual and the Ambiguity of Freedom."

⁴⁶ *Political Imagination*, p. 188.

the Reformation, and later by the Industrial Revolution. Man, through these new developments, was freed *from* the constrictions of previous provincialisms and was now free *to* live within the expanded horizons of new knowledge, new technology, and new opportunities. But whether he did, in fact, accept his new freedom depended upon his ability and willingness to abandon old securities and to assume new and uncertain risks. The record of modern history indicates that the simple and regressive appeals of autocratic and totalitarian social schemes have succeeded in attracting large segments of modern man. In tracing the development of a "public philosophy," Walter Lippmann similarly observes a critical historical juncture at the end of the middle ages. But he seems to feel that public thought was generally equal to the demands of the changing times, and by a reformulation of basic concepts order was brought out of an initial chaos. It was not, according to Lippmann, until later, in the nineteenth century, that old ideas became particularly resistant to change.

As the diversity of belief, opinion, and interest became greater (after 1500), the need for a common criterion and for common laws became more acute. The new school of natural law that arose after 1500 was able to meet this need until the end of the eighteenth century The old ideas of the eighteenth century were not remitted to meet the new demands of the nineteenth century [growing out of the Industrial Revolution and the enfranchisement and emancipation of the masses], and therefore were abandoned to the reactionaries.⁴⁷

There are many others, of course, as various as Voegelin and Marx, who locate someplace in the modern period of history the primary dislocations and changes that still plague modern man with anxieties and alienation as he attempts to find new meaning for himself in his new and perplexing environment.⁴⁸

⁴⁷ *Public Philosophy*, p. 85.

⁴⁸ In the case of Marx, the decisive event is the emergence of the bourgeoisie as a class and the demise of the feudal order. For Voegelin it is the "re-divinization of man and society" that emerged fully in the Modern period, although Voegelin points to earlier events that prefigured this development. J. L. Talmon seems to focus upon the French Revolution as the critical turning point in history: "After 1789 . . . the collapse of the stable relationships and traditional realities . . . evoked yearnings for foolproof schemes of existence" (*Messianism*, p. 24). Also: "The straining after some meta-science was born out of deep and abiding spiritual needs, which were given special urgency by the circumstances of violent break and change in the early nineteenth century (something that incidentally England succeeded in escaping, and with it political Messianism)" (*ibid.*, p. 518). Polanyi suggests a thesis similar to Voegelin's: "The Enlightenment, having secularized Christian hopes, destroyed itself by moral inversion" (*Beyond Nihilism* [Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1960], p. 34). But since then, moral inversion has proved so unsatisfactory and "unstable" that we are tempted to look around for new "revisionist" solutions (*ibid.*, p. 36).

Karl Popper, in contrast, identifies the initial and critical disruption of history with the beginning of Western civilization. As early as the sixth century B.C., according to Popper, "the strain of civilization was beginning to be felt."⁴⁹ This dates the beginning of philosophy, which represents to Popper the attempt to replace tribal magical faith with a "rational faith." Thus was started, by the Greeks, "the transition from the tribal or 'closed society,' with its submission to magical forces to the 'open society' which sets free the critical powers of man."⁵⁰

The closed society, and with it its creed that the tribe is everything and the individual nothing, had broken down. Individual initiative and self-assertion had become a fact. Interest in the human individual as individual, and not only as tribal hero and savior, had been aroused. But a philosophy which makes man the center of its interest began only with Protagoras . . . The appeal to men to respect one another and themselves appears to be due to Socrates.⁵¹

This initial attack upon the collectivist and unreflective commitments of tribal society and the simultaneous confrontation of individual man with the responsibility of personal and rational decision was traumatic in its effect. Popper compares the effect of this social revolution upon the people of that time to the effect that "a serious family quarrel and the breaking up of the family home" has upon the children in that family.⁵² In fact, Popper suggests that "civilization has not yet fully recovered from [this] shock of its birth".⁵³

[The strain of transition] is still felt even in our own day, especially in times of social change. It is the strain created by the effort which life in an open and partially abstract society constantly demands from us—by the endeavor to be rational, to forgo at least some of our emotional social needs, to look after ourselves, and to accept responsibilities. We must, I believe, bear this strain as the price to be paid for every increase in knowledge, in reasonableness, in cooperation and in mutual help, and consequently in our chances of survival, and in the size of the population. It is the price we have to pay for being human.⁵⁴

Furthermore, there is no comfort to be derived from a sense of nearing our goal, for according to Popper, it seems that we are still only at the beginning of this transition from the closed to the open society.⁵⁵

⁴⁹ *Open Society*, Vol. I, p. 176.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 177.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 1.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 176.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 175.

V

The point that seems to emerge from all of this is that because of the nature of reality, reflected in the Christian faith, because of individual man's existential condition, and because of the nature of historical development, tension and alienation are an inevitable part of life realistically lived, a normal condition in society. In Voegelin's words, "the characteristics of the order of being and man's place in it . . . give cause for insecurity."⁵⁶ The more clearly man sees himself in terms of his true nature and the more he frees himself from those beliefs and institutions that deny him fullness of being, the more clearly will he discover that a part of selfhood and fulfillment is estrangement, that to the degree that he is a man he is also alien to his world. Glenn Tinder thus observes:

When men have felt themselves at one with a supreme authority or with some social group, they have been able readily to overlook their infinitude [sic] and their consequent incompatibility with the world. But they thus lived in a state of oblivion, with the soul, in a literal sense, lost. The social conditions of the present tend to dissipate that oblivion. *They do not so much create estrangement; rather they remind us that man is by his essence estranged.*⁵⁷

Instead of speaking of the "infinitude" of men, as Tinder does, I would choose to use the phrase "eternal dimension." For, as I have suggested earlier, man even in Eternity is not infinite, is not to be confused with a quality that is uniquely Divine. The creation remains the creation even when it comes directly into the presence of the Creator. In his temporality, man's nature is ambiguous; in essence, he participates in the Eternal, but this dimension of man remains to be fulfilled. Because he participates in the Eternal, he is largely alienated from his world; but because he is temporal and finite, he fully experiences the inevitable frustrations and limitations of temporal existence. His temporality throws him in the midst of the hazards of existence, and his eternal dimension denies to him the "blissful" oblivion that a total immersion in temporality might otherwise afford him. Life for the man who has emerged to the fullness of discovering his ambiguous nature is, by virtue of its fullness, a difficult and hazardous life. In Voegelin's words, "the hazard of existence without right or reason is a demonic horror; it is hard to bear even for the stronghearted."⁵⁸

No normal man welcomes estrangement, uncertainty, tension: this emotional state is alien to the fulfillment and meaning sought by man in his perennial quest for selfhood and being. Rather, his effort is always to

⁵⁶ "Ersatz Religion," p. 11.

⁵⁷ *Political Imagination*, p. 56. Italics mine.

⁵⁸ *New Science*, p. 168. Karl Mannheim, in discussing the nature of ideology, suggests that its purpose is primarily "to minimize the hazardousness of life." *Ideology and Utopia*, translated by Louis Wirth and Edward Shils (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1952), p. 78.

overcome this condition, to transcend it. Here I must take issue with Polanyi, who feels that man finds satisfaction in tension itself. According to Polanyi:

human beings develop this desire for tension in a variety of forms. Man is one of the animals who continue to play throughout adult life. Men [enjoy adventure.] We all appreciate . . . the solving of puzzles Our gigantic modern amusement industry betokens the popular forms of this desire; but our craving for mental dissatisfaction enters also into the highest forms of man's spontaneous originality.⁵⁹

Polanyi finds this predilection for anxiety and tension most vividly manifested in Christian worship:

The ritual of worship is expressly designed to induce and sustain this state of anguish, surrender and hope.⁶⁰

Christian worship sustains . . . a heuristic vision which is accepted for the sake of its unresolvable tension Christianity sedulously fosters, and in a sense permanently satisfies, man's craving for mental dissatisfaction by offering him the comfort of a crucified God.⁶¹

I submit that the satisfaction man derives from games and puzzles comes from a sense of accomplishment in mastering or solving them. The tension involved in game playing becomes enjoyable only to the degree that it is experienced in anticipation of its own resolution, i.e., only inasmuch as it is viewed as a means to another end. No one will keep working at a puzzle that he knows offers no possibility of solution.⁶² The hope of resolution must always be present. In solving a puzzle, one experiences the satisfaction of knowing that he is able to control that, however small, segment of his environment. This is not to say that one cannot enjoy the challenge of a game that he does not win; rather, that he cannot enjoy a game he knows *cannot* be won. He may know that, in the instance of far more competent competition, *he* cannot win it; but then he enjoys the accomplishment of the opposition; or at least he gains satisfaction from *partial mastery*. Even in playing against insuperable odds, a player tends to imagine the *possibility* of his winning. I might even suggest that in some instances the pleasure of efforts at puzzle solving comes from imagining the puzzle as a microcosmic instance of the more serious cosmic heuristic endeavor. One knows that the answer to the puzzle has already been "discovered," but for the moment it may be imagined that a real "discovery" is being made. Of course, for the person involved, this *is* the case. This psychology of games allows one to experience something of the

⁵⁹ *Personal Knowledge*, p. 196.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 198.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

⁶² Milton Rokeach describes the "defection" that takes place as subjects involved in a puzzle discover that the puzzle cannot be solved. *Open and Closed Mind*, pp. 243-56.

heuristic satisfaction of the real endeavor, while knowing that he is not assuming all its risks. Where we find a person "enjoying" tension or mental dissatisfaction or risk taking as an end in itself, psychologists tend to agree that we are then dealing with a kind of neurosis, a form of enjoyment more likely to be rooted in a desire for self-destruction than in a desire for fulfillment.

The same critique applies, I would suggest, to Polanyi's assessment of the tension-inducing aspects of Christian worship. Whatever satisfaction might ultimately be derived from the acknowledgment of sin, from religious paradox, or from the anticipation of a final judgment is not related to the anguish that one experiences in affirming these elements of the Christian faith, but rather is rooted in the assurance that such affirmation, however unpleasant, is *true*. Whenever man makes contact with reality, even though it may not prove to be what he had *hoped* he would find, he experiences a sense of satisfaction. In the case of the Christian faith, there is much about it that could hardly be construed as a product of man's wishful thinking.⁶³ Even when it is pointed out that the final word of God, for Christians, is the word of love rather than the word of judgment, the Christian would have to insist that this belief is affirmed, no less than the others, not because it is seen as desirable, but because it is seen as *true*. His joy, of course, in making this affirmation reflects the fact that he also experiences it as desirable and good.

By suggesting that normal men do not welcome the tensions, irresolutions, and estrangements that are a normal part of life, I do not mean to imply that it is normal or responsible behavior to flee from or deny this unpleasant (in Voegelin's terms, "demonic") aspect of life. Responsible man does not attempt either to deny or to escape reality. He may try to transcend it, but where this proves futile, he must accept it. Coping realistically in this way with a reality that is sometimes quite independent of, and contradictory to, man's wishes is a burdensome task; as Voegelin tells us, "it is hard to bear even for the stronghearted." It requires a kind of steadfast strength that itself is not easy to come by. Erich Fromm calls it "self-strength"; the way one attains it is, in fact, by forging ahead and taking on the hazardous challenges of life. Others are equally circular and elusive in explaining how one acquires this quality. Voegelin calls it "faith." For Rollo May, it is courage; "Courage is the capacity to meet the anxiety which arises as one achieves freedom."⁶⁴ Karl Popper identifies it

⁶³ Of course, Marx and Fromm, among others, have attempted to explain away what, to them, are the more unacceptable elements of Christianity by describing these as opiates concocted by the bourgeoisie (in the case of Marx) or projections of self-hatred (in the case of Fromm). But Fromm's explanation does not represent what we usually regard as an example of wishful thinking. And Marx's explanation totally fails to take into account the more prophetic aspects of Christianity.

⁶⁴ *Man's Search for Himself* (New York: Norton, 1953), p. 224.

as "hope": "True, we need hope; to act, to live without hope goes beyond our strength. But we do *not* need more, and we must not be given more. We do not need certainty."⁶⁵ This hope, self-strength, or whatever we may wish to call it, is provided to the Christian by the ultimate assurance I previously mentioned, of God's love and acceptance of him. Within the context of this ultimate fulfillment, all the vexatious, demonic, and unfulfilled aspects of life can be seen as less than ultimate and, therefore, as less than ultimate threats to man's being. This does not eradicate the dilemmas of life, or even make them less than demonic, but it does offer to make life, at its worst, bearable.

⁶⁵ *Open Society*, Vol. II, p. 279.