

Logos and Political Order. Representation in the Political Philosophy of Eric Voegelin

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Abstract

This article aims to show the anthropological and political relevance of *logos* or rationality as understood by Eric Voegelin. The paper is divided into two parts, the first elaborates what Voegelin considers to be the discovery of *logos* by Plato and Aristotle, which represents a historical and at the same time epistemological phenomenon of self-illumination of the human psyche. Through the concept of *logos*, the human soul is discovered and, with it the political reality can be ordered and organized. The second part of the article focuses on this political dimension of *logos* or rationality as an element that allows the foundation of political science as it is exposed in Voegelin's *The New Science of Politics* (1952), and the concept of political representation as a central element of Voegelin's political philosophy is explored.

Keywords: Eric Voegelin, Plato, *Logos*, Rationality, Political Philosophy, Representation, Political representation

Resumen

El objetivo del artículo es mostrar la relevancia antropológica y política de la noción de *logos* o racionalidad en la obra del filósofo Eric Voegelin. El artículo se divide en dos partes, en la primera se elabora lo que para Voegelin es el descubrimiento del *logos* por parte de Platón y Aristóteles, lo cual representa un fenómeno histórico y al mismo tiempo epistemológico, de auto-descubrimiento de la *psyche* humana, a través del cual el alma humana queda iluminada desde su interior. Esto permite no solamente una ordenación de la dimensión individual de la persona, sino también de la dimensión política de la vida humana. En la segunda parte del artículo se profundiza en este aspecto político de la racionalidad tal como se presenta en la obra más política de Voegelin, *The New Science of Politics* (1952), y se analiza como a través del concepto de representación política se descubre la relevancia del concepto clásico de racionalidad como fuente de ordenación y comprensión de la realidad política.

Palabras clave: Eric Voegelin, Platón, *Logos*, Racionalidad, Filosofía política, Representación, Representación política

1. *Introduction: Eric Voegelin and the community of being*

The core of Eric Voegelin's (1901-1985) thought is to formulate a theory of man, society, and history based on a theory of order. A project that assumes there is a connection between the order of the soul, the order of the city, the order of the cosmos and, finally, the divine order - all four elements constituting what Voegelin calls the «primordial community of being» (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 14: 39)¹. He himself affirms that he attempts to create «a new social field of existential order in competition with the fields whose claim to truth has become doubtful» (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 18: 39). Indeed, faced with the complex political situation in which he lived, the combined influence of Communism, Fascism, National Socialism, racism, constitutionalism, liberalism, and authoritarianism, Voegelin tried to revive the form of confrontation with political situations that characterized Platonic and Aristotelian political science, considering that «the center of a philosophy of politics had to be a theory of consciousness» (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 12, 304).

According to Voegelin, through the study of our consciousness, we are aware that man is always in the in-between - between animality and divinity, between wisdom and ignorance, between indeterminacy and determination. Man's attunement with order is only possible through his participation in the community of being; and this participation is allowed by virtue of a proper understanding of human rationality or *logos*. When this proper stance of human being in the in-between is lost, forgotten or destroyed, a great danger emerges at both the individual and political levels. This article aims to clarify Voegelin's conception of reason or *logos* so as to discern its relevance in the understanding and orientation of political reality and science. In order to do that, we will clarify Voegelin's conception of political representation as he presents it his *The New Science of Politics*².

2. *The discovery of reason as a force of resistance against personal and social disorder*

From Voegelin's perspective, the discovery of reason or *logos* is a historical event. Plato and Aristotle discovered reason or *logos* as a source of order, and in doing so they discovered one important moment of the "community of being" as well. The

¹ All references to Voegelin follow his *Collected Works (CW)*, as published in 34 volumes by the University of Missouri Press. The first number of the quotation indicates the volume, and the next one the page. See the bibliography below.

² Along this article we will quote the original English version from the *Collected Works*. There is also a Spanish translation of this work (VOEGELIN, 2006).

philosopher from Cologne considers this truth to be a historical achievement, meaning that it is the result of a long process of differentiation of an experience.³ This aspect has to do with Voegelin's conception of the theory of consciousness as an unfolding process in history, a process that is not linear, but needs to be rather understood as moving «backward and forward and sideways, in order to follow empirically the patterns of meaning as they revealed themselves in the self-interpretation of persons and societies in history» (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 17: 106)⁴. The closer an experience is to being an opening towards transcendence, the more differentiated it is. Thus, a process in which the attunement with the divine order plays a central role:

The truth of man and the truth of God are inseparably one. 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. This is the great subject of the *Republic*. (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 5: 143).

In *Reason, the classical experience* (1974) (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 12), Voegelin explores the process of discovery and differentiation of the *logos* or rationality. He argues that this discovery implies the discovery of our existence in the *metaxy*, in the in-between - between God and man, between transcendence and immanence, between νοῦς and ἄπειρον. Existence in the in-between means existence in the μεταξύ, a Platonic term that Voegelin uses to designate the situation of the human being in the whole of reality (see *Symposium*, 202a; *Philebus*, 16de and 30bc; cf. Voegelin, *CW*, 12: 279-292)⁵. There is a tension between the divine νοῦς that pulls us and the human νοῦς (or reason) that moves us towards its origins thanks to the strength of the ψυχή. In other words, there is no ζήτησις (research) without ἔλκειν - the drag understood as the experience of the power of attraction exercised by transcendence (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 12: 281): «the experience is neither in the subject

³ The concept of differentiation is central to understand Voegelin philosophy of history. As he would put it, «when a new differentiation occurs, the area of reality newly articulated will be understood as an area of particular importance; and the overrating of its importance amidst the joy of discovery may lead to the neglect of other areas of reality that were contained in the earlier compact experience but now are neglected. The most important such event of neglect has occurred in the modern age in the wake of the newly differentiated natural sciences» (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 34: 134).

⁴ Compare the first three volumes with the fourth and the fifth of *Order and History*. See RHODES (1992).

⁵ For Voegelin's interpretation of Plato, see, most importantly, volumes 15th and 16th of his *Collective Works*. See also PLANINC (2001); RHODES (1992); ANASTAPLO (1988); ROSEN (1958), 257-284. For the specific case of his interpretation of Plato *Philebus*, see TORRES-MONTSERRAT I MOLA (2017).

nor in the world of objects, but In-Between, and that means In-Between the poles of man and of the reality that he experiences» (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 34: 98)⁶.

What is relevant for us here is that the existence of man under this tension is sustained through the strength and orientation of *logos* or reason as understood by the classical philosophers, that is, as the possibility of order of the human soul. As Voegelin puts it, «the life of Reason in the classic sense is existence in tension between Life and Death», between immortalizing and moralizing. When man abandons himself to his desires (ἐπιθυμία) and ambitions (φιλονικία), all his thoughts (δόγματα) become mortal, but when he cultivates his love for wisdom and truth, when he thinks immortal and divine things, he will then become immortal as far as this is possible for man's nature (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 12: 282; cf. Plato, *Timaeus*, 90ab).

This adverbial situation of man defines him as a being open to the knowledge of the whole. Yet, at the same time, as a being that constantly has to fight to avoid falling into one of the poles of tension, namely, either into the materialistic or *apeironic* pole of reality or into its divinized pole that leads to religious dogmatism, Gnosticism or other *parousistic* extremes⁷. In this sense, the discovery of reason is not only a theoretical achievement, but also an act of resistance against personal and social disorder:

I shall not deal with the “idea” or a nominalist “definition” of reason but with the process in reality in which concrete human beings, the “lovers of wisdom”, the philosophers as they styled themselves, were engaged in an act of resistance against the personal and social disorder of their age. From this act there emerged the *nous* as the cognitively luminous force that inspired the philosophers to resist and, at the same time,

⁶ For Voegelin there is a difference between human *nous* and divine *nous*, which is also often called «ground of being» (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 17: 301-302; VOEGELIN, *CW*, 6: 62-139). Voegelin's interpretation of the first sentence of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* (“All men by nature desire to know”, *Met.* I i 980a21) can clarify the difference. As Voegelin sees it, what they desire to know is the ground of being, which attracts us and at the same time produces a desire in us. *Nous* means for Voegelin both the human capacity for intelligent search of the Ground as well as the Ground of being itself (see Arist. *Metaph.*, 993b 2 ff. and 1070a 4 ff.). As Voegelin puts it, «From the side of the human nous, the knowing questions and questioning knowledge [wissende Fragen und fragende Wissen], that is the noetic act (noesis), is cognitive participation in the Ground of being; the noetic participation, however, is possible because it is preceded by participation of the divine in the human nous» (VOEGELIN, 1966, 290-292). See SANDOZ (1981), 158-159.

⁷ In his *Science, Politics and Gnosticism* Voegelin claims to have found the right term to characterize a new phase of Western gnosis: parousiasm, a term inspired by the heideggerian conception of *parousia*: «For this purpose we shall take over from Heidegger's interpretation of being the term ‘parousia’, and speak of parousiasm as the mentality that expects deliverance from the evils of the time through the advent, the coming in all its fullness, of being construed as immanent» (VOEGELIN, *CW*5: 327). *Parousia* (παρουσία) is an ancient Greek word meaning presence, arrival, or official visit. The word is used 24 times in the *New Testament*.

enabled them to recognize the phenomena of disorder in the light of a humanity ordered by the nous. Thus, reason in the noetic sense was discovered as both the force and the criterion of order (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 12: 265).

For Voegelin, religious dogmatism or Gnosticism can be seen in authors ranging from Hobbes, Hegel, Nietzsche, Heidegger or even the theorists of National-Socialism, all of which promise some kind of salvation from the sufferings of this world:

In the modern Western history of unrest [...] from the Hobbesian 'fear of death' to Heidegger's Angst, the tonality has shifted from joyful participation in a theophany to the *agnoia ptoiodes*, to the hostile alienation from a reality that rather hides than reveals itself. A Hobbes replaces the *summum bonum* with the *summum malum* as the ordering force of man's existence; a Hegel builds his state of alienation into a system and invites all men to become Hegelians; a Marx rejects the Aristotelian quest of the ground outright and invites you to join him, as a 'socialist man,' in his state of alienation; a Freud diagnoses the openness toward the ground as an 'illusion,' a 'neurotic relict,' and an 'infantilism'; a Heidegger waits for a 'parousia of being' which does not come, a Sartre feels 'condemned to be free' and thrashes around in the creation of substitute meanings for the meaning he has missed (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 12: 277).

Inspired by the Platonic description, the author of the *New Science of Politics* identifies as eristic the different ways the tension in the *metaxy* can be broken into, producing what he calls an «act of libidinous transgression with the *apeironic* depth» (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 12: 283). In this sense, the different symbolizations of the classic philosophers, especially the notion of *logos* or reason, are instruments and symbols at the service of political and individual order. Therefore, the classical sense of *logos* and rationality should be at the very base of science and of political science also. The aspiration to be "scientific" in the narrow sense (meaning in a more quantitative, value-free kind of knowledge) has led social scientists to overlook the fundamental problems of human existence. In this regard, the call for a new science of politics is not simply a nostalgic desire to return to the past, but a necessity for the future (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 6: 376).

3. Order and disorder in the political sphere and the different levels of representation

In his most important political work, the *New Science of Politics*, presented in Chicago in 1951 and published a year later, Voegelin shows the political relevance of his findings in the field of the theory of consciousness (findings that include, in a privileged position, his understanding of reason and rationality). As we mentioned above, a political science needs to be based in a theory of consciousness in a self-

illuminating process that allows the clarification of reality and that can also serve as a source of resistance against disorder. From his perspective, there is no way, against Max Weber (who inspired large parts of Voegelin's work)⁸, to understand the political reality without attending to the values attached to it, and, more specifically, without seeing the transcendental and religious dimension of society⁹:

Human society is not merely a fact, or an event, in the external world to be studied by an observer like a natural phenomenon. Though it has externality as one of its important components, it is as a whole a little world, a *cosmion*, illuminated with meaning from within by the human beings who continuously create and bear it as the mode and condition of their self-realization. It is illuminated through an elaborate symbolism, in various degrees of compactness and differentiation –from rite, through myth, to theory- and this symbolism illuminates it with meaning in so far as the symbols make the internal structure of such a *cosmion* [...] transparent for the mystery of human existence (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 5: 109).

Society needs to be seen as a small cosmos (a *cosmion*, as he calls it) that is constantly created, interpreted and transformed by its own citizens. To understand a *cosmion*, which means everything that makes possible the political unity of a given society, the political scientist needs to take into account three aspects or dimensions. All these three aspects allow us, in fact, to understand how the political scientist uses his rationality or *logos* in a non-instrumental sense, that is, in a sense inspired (although not identical) in the platonic-aristotelian science:

i) First of all, there is the self-interpretation of society. Every society interprets itself through certain symbols that show its participation in the common (what Heraclitus called the *xynon*). These symbols, Voegelin states, may not be part of the vocabulary of the political scientist, but they all indicate that there is something that transcends mere individuality. In today's situation, these symbols could be, for instance, 'country', 'empire', 'nation', 'emancipation', 'freedom', 'independence', etc. It is of relevance to notice that, for Voegelin, the political scientist must start its inquiry from these symbols found in the context of the *cosmion*, in the self-understanding symbols used by the citizens of a given community. This way of approaching social reality is directly derived from the way both Plato and Aristotle, in his respective works and in different ways, understood the relevance of *doxa*. In Plato's case, the most part of his

⁸ For Voegelin's relationship with Max Weber and the influence that he had on him, see VOEGELIN (*CW*, 34: 39-41) and also SIGWART (2004) and PETROPULOS (2006).

⁹ See, in this sense, one of his first works, *The political Religions*, from 1933 (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 5: 19-74), translated into Spanish (VOEGELIN, 2014).

dialogues start or include the confrontation with the opinion to be found in society: *doxa* is not only the contrary to *episteme*, but also the first step to be followed in order to attain any kind of knowledge (see, for instance, Plato, *Republic*, 358e and ff.). In the case of Aristotle, as we can see in almost all of his major works, his research starts from a recollection of the *endoxai* accumulated upon time to clarify the issue that needs to be explained (see, for instance, Aristotle, *Politics* 1280a 7 and ff.).

ii) Secondly, Voegelin argues the need to translate all these symbols into the language of political science in order to make them understandable. This process, the author clarifies, would be the one that Plato and Aristotle followed in order to explain society through symbols like ‘polis’, ‘justice’, ‘philosophy’ or ‘happiness’. The political scientist must be able to find the symbols that may reflect and also describe what can be found in the self-interpretation of society.

iii) Finally, there is the need for a “critical clarification” in order to distinguish and establish which elements found in i) should become elements in ii) since this process will determine which elements deserve real attention for the scientist. This process, Voegelin argues, would be similar to the one that Plato described as the movement from *doxa* (or ideology) to proper knowledge or *episteme*. In a similar way, Aristotle did not invent his own conception of notions like ‘polis’, ‘constitution’, ‘form of government’, ‘justice’, or ‘happiness’ when wrote his *Ethics* and *Politics*, «he took rather the symbols that he found in his social environment, surveyed with care the variety of meanings that they had in common parlance, and ordered and clarified these meanings by the criteria of his theory» (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 5: 110). Voegelin is fully aware that «there are numerous political scientists today that would even call the Platonic-Aristotelian *episteme* an ideology» (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 5: 111). Nonetheless, he considers that the critical clarification is one of the most important moments of the constitution of a science of order.

Voegelin’s intention is to apply this methodology to the question of representation, which I will clarify in the next sections. Originally, the title of the Walgreen Lectures that took place in 1951 at the University of Chicago and that would later be published as *The New Science of Politics*, was in fact «Truth and Representation». The concept of political representation is the chosen example to put into action the “new” method of facing political reality. As we shall see, Voegelin, using the aforementioned dimensions, distinguishes between three levels of political representation: elementary, existential and transcendental.

3.1. *Elementary level of representation*

Voegelin begins with a pre-theoretical understanding of political representation that he calls elementary. This form of representation concerns what people would answer to the question: what is political representation? In this regard, we shall find different models of representation in different countries and contexts - depending on how elections are organized, the system of voting, the participation and the party system, etc. Observing this diversity of opinions, one could endorse different models, like the one defending the need of multiple parties or of two parties or even of a single one. All these different ways of understanding political representation are reflected, at the same time, in real models of action through history, models that can be seen in today's China (one party system), USA (two parties system) or Europe (various parties model). At the same time, this model of representation applies also to the mixed constitutions of the one, the few, and the many of Greek and Roman antiquity.

According to the author of the *New Science of Politics*, the constitutional form of democracy is not a guarantee to the establishment of a democratic order, and in fact this very democratic system can be extraordinarily susceptible to internal overthrow by a ruler who becomes an enemy of democracy. This is so because, as he states, «if a government is nothing but representative in the constitutional sense, a representative ruler in the existential sense will sooner or later make an end of it; and quite possibly the new existential ruler will not be too representative in the constitutional sense» (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 5: 126). In this regard, although being a supporter of democracy, Voegelin doesn't want to make this system the quintessence of political order. More than ever, modern societies are confronted today with different forms of populism that arise from fully constitutional democracies. That, among other elements, makes Voegelin's reflection on the way political science should base its research of great actuality.

3.2. *Existential level of representation*

The political scientist, as Voegelin asserts, needs to move from an elementary to an existential level of representation, that is, representation understood as the core of an effective government. Existential representation may be exemplified with the fact that a given government is accepted and tolerated because it carries on fundamental purposes for which any government is established, like securing the domestic peace, the defense of the realm, the administration of justice, taking care of the welfare of the people, etc. The main notion that explains this form of representation is articulation: there is always an articulation of the community that allows representation to take

place. «As a result of political articulation, - Voegelin says - we find human beings, the rulers, who can act for the society, men whose acts are not imputed to their own persons but to the society as a whole» (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 5: 117).

This articulation can take a variety of forms that can be observed, for instance, in the shift from monarchy to parliamentarism or to democracy, where the symbol of the “people” becomes central. Precisely, in the democratic sense of articulation, Lincoln’s sentence reflects its complexity: a «government of the people, by the people, for the people». Voegelin’s crucial intuition here is that, without a representative who could ‘articulate’ the totality of the community to each and everyone of its members, without a representative who would allow society to represent itself for itself, this society will not, in its turn, be able to select its ‘representative’ and, thus, will not be ‘democratic’ (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 5: 120). From the point of view of the author of the *New Science of Politics*, the effective representation of individuals within a given society does not occur everywhere except only in Western societies: «it is by far not an appurtenance of the nature of man but cannot be separated from certain historical conditions that, again, are given only in the Occident» (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 5: 120)

For our author, following here Sir John Fortescue (chief justice of the kingdom of England in the XIVth century), the final articulation could allow us to call the community a *corpus mysticum*, were

the sacramental bond would neither be the *Logos* of Christ that lives in the members of the Christian *corpus mysticum* nor the perverted *Logos* as it Lives in modern totalitarian communities. Nevertheless, while he [Fortescue] was not clear about the implications of his search for an immanent *Logos* of society, he found a name for it; he called it the *intencio populi*. This *intencio populi* is the center of the mystical body of the realm; again, in an organic analogy, he described it as the heart from which is transmitted into the head and members of the body as its nourishing bloodstream the political provision for the well-being of the people (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 5: 122).

That means that in order to be representative, it is not enough for the government to be representative in the constitutional sense (our elemental kind of representational institutions), it must also be representative in the existential sense of accomplishing the idea of the institution. All in all, for Voegelin, the existential dimension is needed, because when our representatives do not fulfill their existential task, there is no constitutional legality in their position that could save them: «the practical disregard for this problem», he concludes in his *New Science of Politics*, «has been an important contributive factor in our time in the serious internal upheavals of Western political societies as well as in their tremendous international repercussions» (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 5: 128)

3.3. *Transcendental level of representation*

In Voegelin's analysis, there is still another level or dimension of representation beyond the existential one, «something like a representation of truth to be found in political societies in history» (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 5: 130); the existential representation needs to be «supplemented in historically existing societies by a claim to 'transcendental representation' [...] by 'transcendental representation I meant the symbolization of the government function as representative of divine order in the cosmos [...] Nothing has changed in this fundamental structure of governmental order, not even in the modern ideological empires. The only difference is that the god whom the government represents has been replaced by an ideology of history that now the government represents in its revolutionary capacity» (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 34: 92). This kind of representation can be seen in three different models or paradigms: the cosmological, the anthropological and, finally, the soteriological sense of truth.

3.3.1. *The cosmological truth: empires and cosmic order*

This form of representation seems to be the right one for what Voegelin calls the cosmological empires, where the political system appears to be an analogue of the cosmic order - a little world reflecting the order of the great, comprehensive world. Voegelin mentions the example of the Behistun Inscription and that of the Mongols under the rule of Genghis Khan, who believed their empire represented the truth of God or of the cosmic order itself (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 5: 135). Nonetheless, the author of the *New Science of Politics* considers that this sense of the transcendental truth is not exclusive of the ancient empires, it is also present in some ideological movements of the XXth century:

Not only does cosmological representation survive in the imperial symbols of the Western Middle Ages or in continuity in to the China of the twentieth century; its principle is also recognizable where the truth to be represented is symbolized in an entirely different manner. In Marxian dialectics, for instance, the truth of cosmic order is replaced by the truth of a historically immanent order. Nevertheless, the Communist movement is a representative of this differently symbolized truth in the same sense in which a Mongol Khan was the representative of the truth contained in the Order of God; and the consciousness of this representation leads to the same political and legal constructions as in the other instances of imperial representation of truth. Its order is in harmony with the truth of history; its aim is the establishment of the realm of freedom and peace; the opponents run counter to the truth of history and will be defeated in the end; nobody can be at war with the Soviet Union legitimately but must be a representative of untruth in history, or, in contemporary language, an aggressor; and the victims are not conquered but liberated from their oppressors and there with from the untruth of their existence (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 5: 134-135).

This way of interpreting equivalences between political structures and symbolization is one of Voegelin's most peculiar features. Societies reproduce similar forms of symbolization of order in different ways and in different historical circumstances. This is possible because in different historical circumstances humans experience similar experiences, and these experiences can be traced through the symbols they leave¹⁰.

3.3.2. *The anthropological truth: the discovery of the human soul as a source of order.*

The truth that will come to challenge the truth of the cosmological empires is, according to Voegelin, an event of major dimensions that occurs in different civilizations at a similar time (between the 800 and the 200 BC)¹¹ - in China with Confucius and Lao-tse; in India with the Upanishads and Buddha, in Persia with Zoroastrianism, in Israel with the prophets and in Hellas with the philosophers and the tragedy. Although Voegelin develops in other places the other models of truth, in the *New Science of politics* he focuses on the establishment of Philosophy in Greece, because it is only in this particular case that the revelation of the truth leads to the creation of a political science at the same time. And that happened thanks to the Platonic-Aristotelian efforts, and specifically through the idea that the polis is man written large (developed in Plato's *Republic*, 368c and ff). Political science is based on this very idea, the idea that the man (its soul) is at the center of the political order: «a political society in existence will have to be an ordered *cosmion*, but not at the price of man; it should be not only a microcosmos but also a macroanthropos. This principle of Plato will briefly be referred to as the anthropological principle» (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 5: 136).

According to Voegelin, the so-called anthropological principle has two main functions: first of all, it serves as a general principle for the interpretation of society based on the model of the truth of the soul, as represented by the philosopher as a lover of the divine *sophon* (*Phaedrus* 278de; *Republic*, 492ab; 435c; 544de).

¹⁰ The relevance of equivalences of symbolization is clarified especially in his «Equivalences of Experiences and symbolization in History» (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 12: 115-133).

¹¹ Voegelin refers here to the term known as "axial age" coined by K. Jaspers in his *Vom Ursprung und Ziel der Geschichte* (1949), a notion discussed by Henri Bergson's *Les deux sources de la morale et de la religion* (1932). A latter article reads: «With impeccable caution it has been characterized by Bergson as the 'opening of the soul'; and less impeccably, with an anti-Christian prejudice, by Jaspers as the 'axis-time' of mankind. The outbreak of imperial expansion was thus accompanied by an opening of spiritual and intellectual horizons which raised humanity to a new level of consciousness» (VOEGELIN, 1962, 171).

Secondly, the principle serves as an instrument of social critique: «the new measure that is found for the critique of society is, indeed, not man himself but man in so far as through the differentiation of his psyche he has become the representative of divine truth» (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 5: 141-142). This function can be seen, for example, through the opposite pairs of concepts philosopher-sophist or philosophy-philodoxy, in which the second terms of each pairing represent the prototype of disorder, whereas the former terms represent the truth. In *Order and History*, this aspect of philosophical thinking will be clarified as one of the most peculiar aspects of platonic philosophy, where «pairs must be understood in their aggregate as the expression of a man's resistance to a social corruption that goes so deep that it affects the truth of existence under God. Philosophy, thus, has its origin in the resistance of the soul to its destruction by society» (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 16: 122-123)

For the author of *The New Science of Politics*, the discovery of the anthropological principle is intimately connected with the discovery of the soul as a source of order: «the true order of the soul in this sense furnishes the standard for measuring and classifying the empirical variety of human types as well as of the social order in which they find their expression» (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 5: 138). This soul can be seen from a variety of expressions altogether, each one reflecting different experiences of the philosopher in face of his existence: reason or *nous*, as we explained before, furnishes one of these expressions. This experience was also anticipated in the tragedy, specifically in the *Suppliants* or the *Prometheus* of Aeschylus, which represents, as Voegelin puts it, a public liturgy that re-enacts the great decision of Dike and consists mainly in representative suffering¹². The model of the philosophical soul inspired by the love of a divine *sophon* is also to be found in Heraclitus (B35, B40, B50, B108), Plato (*Phaedrus*, 278de) or Augustine (*Civ. Dei* VIII 1); or further in the Aristotelian *spoudaios*, the mature man (*EN* 1113a, 29-35). All these principles serve, Voegelin conveys, as the basis of the Platonic-Aristotelian political science and for the new model of truth to represent the community of men, that is, the anthropological truth. As the philosopher from Cologne points out, «the discovery and exploration of these experiences started centuries before Plato and continued after him» (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 5: 140).

From Voegelin's perspective, the Platonic discovery allows the creation of a new model of political representation, a representation in which we are identified with a certain a community that has the complete spectrum of this community of being in

¹² This same idea is fully developed in *Order and History*, where platonic dialogue is described as a «successor to Aeschylean tragedy under the new political conditions» (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 16: 65).

its center: man, city, cosmos and god. In the platonic image, God appears as the Measure of all things (Plat. *Leg.* 716c) and, in this sense, the parable of the cave can be interpreted as a description of a *periagoge*, understood as a conversion from the sophistic society «to the truth of the Idea»:

The meaning of the anthropological principle must, therefore, be qualified by the understanding that what becomes the instrument of social critique is, not an arbitrary idea of man as a world-immanent being, but the idea of a man who has found his true nature through finding his true relation to God. The new measure that is found for the critique of society is, indeed, not man himself but man in so far as through the differentiation of his psyche he has become the representative of divine truth (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 5: 141-142).

As shown above, as we described the discovery of reason or *logos* by Plato and Aristotle, the discovery of the soul serves as a source of order for both the individual and the community, and as an instrument of social critique also. Thanks to the platonic model of representation, deviated or imperfect forms of political order can be criticized. Be that as it may, for the philosopher from Cologne, the anthropological truth was a reality during a short period of time only, over the span of time going from the Greek tragedy to Plato. But the lesson that we learned from this truth would endure all history (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 15: 5-6). Nonetheless, great part of Voegelin's effort is devoted to revive, not the anthropological principle in itself, but its essence, distilled from the contextual and historical ambient of Plato and Aristotle. Notably, Voegelin aims to preserve the power of reason and the soul to maintain the equilibrium between the poles that constitute the human nature and that allow a political order, as we shall see.

3.3.3. *Soteriological truth: the representation of men through salvation*

The last model of truth that appears in the history of order is, for the author of *The New Science of Politics*, the soteriological truth, that is, the truth derived from Christianity and its message of salvation (*soterios*). The main difference between the anthropological truth and the soteriological is that, according to Christianity, the transcendence of God allows a more direct relationship between man and God or, in other words, there is a direct and salvatory relationship between both, a difference best expressed by the Aristotelian conception of political *philia*:

The impossibility of *philia* between God and man may be considered typical for the whole range of anthropological truth. The experiences that were explicated into a theory of man by the mystic philosophers had in common the accent on the human side of the orientation of the soul toward divinity. The soul orients itself toward a God

who rests in his immovable transcendence; it reaches out toward divine reality, but it does not meet an answering movement from beyond. The Christian bending of God in grace toward the soul does not come within the range of these experiences -though, to be sure, in reading Plato one has the feeling of moving continuously on the verge of a breakthrough into this new dimension. The experience of mutuality in the relation with God, of the *amicitia* in the Thomistic sense, of the grace that imposes a supernatural form on the nature of man, is the specific difference of Christian truth (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 5: 150).

For Voegelin, the new truth of Christianity implies (contrary to Karl Jaspers and partly conflicting with Bergson) a real new stage in the comprehension of human nature and political order and the political theorist needs to take it into account. This fact has to do with Voegelin's conception of history and its process of differentiation: «the substance of history consists in the experiences in which man gains the understanding of his humanity and together with the understanding of its limits» (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 5: 151). In the process of differentiation, having absorbed and enriched the understanding of the soul attained by Greek philosophy, Christianity represents the maximum openness of man toward transcendence, thus representing the real understanding of the human being in the μεταξύ of god and man:

Since the maximum of differentiation was achieved through Greek philosophy and Christianity, this means specifically that theory is bound to move within the historical horizon of classic and Christian experiences. To recede from the maximum of differentiation is a theoretical retrogression; it will result in various types of derailment which Plato has characterized as *doxa*. Whenever in modern intellectual history a revolt against the maximum of differentiation was undertaken systematically, the result was the fall into anti-Christian nihilism, into the idea of the superman in one or the other of its variants - be it the progressive superman of Condorcet, the positivistic superman of Comte, the materialistic superman of Marx, or the Dionysiac superman of Nietzsche (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 5: 152).

Conclusions: logos as a source of political order and political criticism

Thus, Voegelin's philosophy can be understood as a confrontation against different kinds of δόξα in the Platonic sense. The deformations of reality carried out by modern ideologies or philosophical schools are only possible after the appearance of Christianity:

The bond is tenuous, indeed, and it may snap easily. The life of the soul in openness toward God, the waiting, the periods of aridity and dullness, guilt and despondency, contrition and repentance, forsakenness and hope against hope, the silent stirrings of love and grace, trembling on the verge of a certainty which if gained is loss-the very lightness of this fabric may prove too heavy a burden for men who lust for massively possessive experience. The danger of a breakdown of faith to a socially relevant degree, now, will increase in the measure in which Christianity is a worldly success, that is, it

will grow when Christianity penetrates a civilizational area thoroughly, supported by institutional pressure, and when, at the same time, it undergoes an internal process of spiritualization, of a more complete realization of its essence. The more people are drawn or pressured into the Christian orbit, the greater will be the number among them who do not have the spiritual stamina for the heroic adventure of the soul that is Christianity (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 5: 187-188)

Notice that classical philosophy, specially the conception of *logos* or rationality as symbolically differentiated by Plato and Aristotle, serves as a source of orientation towards a proper comprehension of our place in the *metaxy*. As Voegelin explains in the aforementioned article: «historically, the experience of immortalizing in the unfolding of rational consciousness has been, and still is, the storm center of misunderstanding, fallacious misconstruction, and furious attacks» because «if man exists in the *metaxy*, in the tension ‘between god and man’», then, «any construction of man as a world-immanent entity will destroy the meaning of existence, because it deprives man of his specific humanity» (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 12: 280). The same idea expressed in his «What is nature?»:

If the consciousness of the cosmic bond of being that lies in the background of all philosophical thinking fades out, then there emerges the well-known dangers of an ungodded world and of an unworlded god, of a world reduced to nothing but a nexus of relationship among existent things, so that it is no longer a world, and of a God reduced to mere existence so that it is no longer a god (VOEGELIN, *CW*: 6, p. 165).

Christianism, and with it the soteriological truth, effectively accomplishes what was in the spirit of classic or mystic philosophers. Revelation only places man in front of his true humanity. This new truth would have been effective for the government during the Roman empire, when by the IIIrd century after Christ the empire had to decide what truth to represent after the Roman myth had lost its power. Rome seems to have ended up accepting the practice of Christianity for religious and cult reasons. The problem was that there were fundamental incompatibilities between Christianity and paganism, and the radical dedivinisation of the world could only destroy the empire. The central problem that Voegelin discloses here is the presence of a transcendental form of representation in the immanent world, specifically, in a dedivinized world:

Western Christian society thus was articulated into the spiritual and temporal orders, with pope and emperor as the supreme representatives in both the existential and the transcendental sense. From this society with its established system of symbols emerge the specifically modern problems of representation, with the resurgence of the eschatology of the realm (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 5: 178).

As the philosopher from Cologne stated in the last chapter of *The New Science of Politics*, there is a need, anticipated by Thomas Hobbes, of a civil theology in order to confront all possible gnostic or *parousistic* deviations of society. The movement from the *summum bonum* to the *summum malum* described by Hobbes clearly shows the shift from classical thought to modernity. Rather than rationality or *Logos*, rather than the image of the human being in its attunement with the whole, at the center of a political philosophy we find the human passion of egoism. There is not a sense of the Aristotelian or Christian *homonoia* in the construction of the social structures but, instead, isolated individuals who seek their own protection. If human nature is assumed to be nothing but passionate existence, devoid of the ordering resources of the soul, the horror of annihilation will be, indeed, the overriding passion that would compel submission to order. If pride cannot bow to Dike, or be redeemed by grace, it must be broken by the Leviathan, who «is the king of all the children pride». If the soul cannot participate in the *Logos*, then the sovereign who strikes terror into the soul will be the «essence of the commonwealth». The “King of the Proud” must break the *amor sui* that cannot be relieved by the *amor Dei* (*CW*, 5: 237-238).

Voegelin’s project aims towards an awareness and a transformation of society that reflects his understanding of the relationship between man, god and the political reality. In his effort to confront the political reality, the classical sense of *Logos* or rationality is presented in all its strength and significance. Nowadays, political science tends to be a more positivistic science (based on quantitative analysis) than anything else. In stark contrast to the positive conception of social science, Plato and Aristotle believed that a serious reflection on the human nature should be the foundation for political order and political science. «Only when ontology as a science was lost», Voegelin states, «and when consequently ethics and politics could no longer be understood as sciences of the order in which human nature reaches its maximal actualization, was it possible for this realm of knowledge to become suspect as a field of subjective, uncritical opinion» (VOEGELIN, *CW*, 5: 96).

For Plato and Aristotle, as we have seen, reason was not merely instrumental, or merely a means to an end, but the principle that should order the soul, let the passions embark in a dialogue and provide a guide to reach social and political order in doing so. Indeed, rationality seems to be far away from something that connects us with a cosmic order or with a divine ground, as a tool to fight against personal and political disorder. We believe that the classical question of what would be the best regime has not yet been settled and needs to be further questioned. Clearly, democracy is the most appropriate answer in many aspects, but when we face the problem of representation,

when we face the problem of justice, more than often, democracy orphans us of a proper answer to our problems.

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