

Voegelin, "The Gospel and Culture"

60 If the community of the Gospel had not entered the culture of its time by entering the life of reason, it would *have* remained an obscure sect and probably disappeared from history; we know the fate of Judeo-Christianity.

60 To Justin, the difference between Gospel and Philosophy is a matter of successive stages in the history of Reason.

61 The authors of the Catechism... anticipate resistance to their attempt at finding the common humanity of men in their being questioners about the meaning of existence... [there seems suggested] an environment where it is not customary to ask questions, where the character of the Gospel as an answer has been so badly obscured by its hardening into self-contained doctrine that the raising of the question to which it is meant as an answer can be suspect as "a non-Christian attitude."

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62 The luminous search in which the finding of the true answer depends on asking the true question, and the asking the true question on the spiritual apprehension of the true answer, is the life of reason. The philosopher can only be delighted by the Catechism's admonition to make "faith" accountable in terms of an answer to questions about the meaning of existence.

65 .. the Western culture of reason is quite alive enough, appearances notwithstanding, to furnish the criteria for characterizing its own deformation.

65 One can speak of a differentiating advance from Myth to Philosophy, or from Myth to Revelation, but one cannot speak of a pattern of differentiating progress from Reason to Unreason.

66 There would be no doctrines of deformed existence today, unless the search of both Philosophy and the Gospel had been overlaid by the late-medieval, radical doctrinization of both Metaphysics and Theology.

70 The search in the In-Between moves from the question of life and death to the answer in the saving tale. But

the question does not arise from a vacuum but from a field of reality and it points toward answers of a certain type; and the saving tale, be it Plato's Pamphylian Myth or John's Gospel, is not an answer given at random, but must recognizably fit the reality of existence which in the question is presupposed as truly experienced. The relationship, which constitutes the truth of the tale, requires further analysis.

70-71 The analysis distinguishes pull and counter pull, the golden cord that awaits decision but invites one upward, the iron cord that drags one down. To accept the latter is to leave the question of meaning unanswered; one senses that one's living is not one's true life; one lives in a state of alienation. The play of the pulls is luminous with truth. By following the wrong course one does not make it the right one but slides into existence in untruth. The lumenosity of existence with the truth of reason precedes all opinions and decisions about the pull to be followed. Moreover, it remains alive as the judgment of truth in existence whatever opinions about it one may actually form.

71 Only from the travail of this movement there emerges man as the questioner, Aristotle's *aporōn* and *thaumazōn* (Met 982b18), and God as the mover who attracts or draws man to himself, as in Plato's Laws X or Aristotle's Metaphysics. These new insights into man's humanity and God's divinity which mark the end of the classic search must not be

72 projected back into its beginning as doctrinal premises, or the reality of the process from which the answering symbols derive their truth would be eclipsed if not destroyed.

73 On man it is incumbent to follow the golden and sacred cord of judgment (*logismos*) and not the cords of the lesser metals. The competence of human action, thus, has not disappeared from the movement, but it has now been fitted into the larger play of pull and counter-pull. For the pull of the golden cord is gentle, without violence; in order to prevail in existence it needs the support of man who must counter-pull to the pull of the lesser cords. Man's self (*autos*) is introduced as the force which must decide the struggle of the pulls through cooperation with the sacred pull of reason (*logos*) and judgment (*logismos*),

75 Theologians' distinction between natural reason and revelation is not a distinction between divine action and ~~xxx~~ human action: all that is good in man is caused by God. But it is in this context that V. writes:

The differences between prophecy, classic philosophy, and the Gospel must be sought in the degrees of differentiation of existential truth.

76 When existence becomes noetically luminous as the field of pull and counter-pull, of the question of life and death, ^{and} of the tension between human and divine reality, it also becomes luminous for divine reality as the Beyond of the metaxy which reaches into the metaxy in the participatory event of the movement.

77 Quoting Jn 12 32 and 6 44

.. John makes it, furthermore, clear that there is no "message" of Christ but the event of the divine Logos becoming present in the world through the representative life and death 78 of a man. The closing words of the great prayer before the Passion express the substance of this event (17 25 f.)::

To follow Christ means to continue the event of divine presence in society and history: "As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world" (17 18). And finally since there is no doctrine to be taught but only the story to be told of God's pull becoming effective in the world through Christ, the ~~x~~ Saving Tale that answers the question of life and death ~~xxx~~ can be reduced to the brief statement (17 3)..

With an admirable economy of means, John symbolizes the pull of the golden cord, its occurrence in an historical event in the representative man, the illumination of existence through the movement from the question of life and death initiated [^] the pull of the saving answer, the creation of a social field through the transmission of the insight to the followers, and ultimately the duties incumbent on John to promulgate the event to mankind at large through writing the Gospel as a literary document. (Jn 20 30 f.)

80 The noetic core, thus, is the same in both classic philosophy and Gospel movement... (read rest of this paragraph)

80 f. Though the noetic core ~~x~~ is the same in the Gosepl, its spritual dynamics has radically changed through the experience of an extraordinary divine irruption in Jesus (cf rest).

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82 ... and the author of Colossians indeed extracted from the Pauline passage the distinction between the divine "invisibles" and the "visibles" of participatory experiences; he distinguished the invisible God, experienced as real beyond the metaxy of existence, from the theotes, the divine reality which enters the metaxy in the movement of existence.

82 f Summary of process from intra-cosmic gods through unknown god of Amon hymns, participated by intra-cosmic gods, through deuterio-Isaias who conceived the intra-cosmic gods as manmade idols, through classic philosophy, through the gospels...

83 Even then the movement might have proved socially and historically abortive, unless the Classic movement, as well as its continuation by the Hellenistic thinkers, had provided the noetic instruments for the resymbolization of reality beyond the restricted area of reality of the movement itself in accordance with the truth of the Gospel; and even when the Gospel, favored by this cultural constellation, had become socially effective, it took another twelve hundred years for the problem of contingent and necessary being to be articulated by the scholastic thinkers.

83 The dynamics of the process are still imperfectly understood, because the spectacular break-throughs in history leave in their wake a sediment of Before-and-After symbols which severely distort reality when they are used in the interpretation of cultural history: Before Philosophy there was Myth; before Christianity there were pagan idols and the Jewish Law; before monotheism there was polytheism; and before modern science, of course, there //84// were such primitive superstitions as Philosophy and the Gospel, Metaphysics and Theology, which no self-respecting person should touch nowadays. Not everyone is as tolerant and as intelligent as the Jesus who could say: "Think not that I have come to dissolve (katalysai) the law and the prophets but to fulfil (plerosai)" (Mt 5 17). This sediment of phenotypes ignores that, as a matter of historical record, the truth of reality is always present in man's experience and that what changes are the degrees of differentiation, Cosmological cultures are not a domain of primitive idolatry, polytheism, or paganism, but highly sophisticated fields of mythical imagination, quite capable of finding the

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proper symbols for the concrete or typical cases of divine presence in a cosmos in which divine reality is omnipresent. The gods of cosmological culture, one may say, have a foreground of specific and a background of universal divine presence; they are specific divinities who partake of universal divine reality.

85 This unknown Amon, however, though he is in the process of being differentiated from the specific Amon of Thebes, is not one more god in the cosmological pantheon, but the theotes of the movement which, in the further process of revelation can be differentiated to its climactic revelation in Christ. Moreover, since the unknown god is not a new god but the divine reality experienced as present also in the known gods, the revelatory process is bound to become a source of cultural conflicts as the differentiation of its truth progresses.... For the men engaged in the movement tend to raise the divine reality they experience to the rank of a god in the image of the known gods who are demoted to the rank of false gods; while the cosmological believers, who are sure of the divinity of their gods, will accuse the carriers of the movement of atheism, or at least of subverting the sacral order of society through the introduction of new gods. This conflict is still fundamentally the issue between Celsus in his attack on Christianity and Origen in his Contra Celsum.

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The Amon Hymns are the representative document of the movement at the stage where the splendor of the cosmological gods has become derivative, though the gods themselves have not become false. Seven hundred years later, in the Deutero-Isaianic equivalent to the Amon Hymns (Is 40 12-25), the gods have become man-made idols who no longer partake of divine reality, while the unknown god has acquired the monopoly of divinity. The author visibly struggles with the dynamics of the new situation. On the one hand, his god is alone with himself and his ruach from the beginning (40 12-14), thus being properly unknown like Amon; on the other hand, he is a known god and even berates men for not knowing him as well as they should, very much in the manner of Paul berating the pagans for not knowing God though he has revealed himself in his creation (Is 40 21):