

Texts from Webb (W) and Voegelin (V)

W 271 Existential truth in Voegelin's thought is not an idea nor is it a fact; it is a life -- a life that is both an action and a passion and that is known as such only from within, through the faith, hope and love that are its principal constituents.

W 115 As he stated the principle in 'What is political Reality?': "Historically considered, the reality of participating knowledge manifests itself as a fullness so rich that it goes far beyond ratio alone. I am thinking particularly about the experience of faith, love, and hope, which Heraclitus had already recognized and distinguished as sources of knowledge. One may therefore speak not only of cognitio rationis (knowledge by way of reason) but also by way of cognitiones fidei, amoris et spei (knowledge by way of faith, love, and hope). Furthermore, the cognitiones in the reality of knowledge are woven together into a complex that is knowledge only as a whole. Neither is there a knowledge independent of the other modes of knowledge nor can they be independent of it."

Webb's translation of the German Anamnesis, p. 324. The English Anamnesis has a similar passage, p. 184.

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Webb 115 continues: This is to say that faith, love, and hope are ways in [^]the tension of existence becomes enacted in man's search for true being, and that they lead necessarily, when one is faithful to their intrinsic dynamics, to attempts to develop adequate, critically reflected symbolizations. It is also to say that no matter how far reason progresses into conscious clarity, it remains rooted in the whole of experience, /116/ //which is informed throughout by the direction-giving tension. Reason, the power of self-reflective, critically methodical inquiry, could never begin its seeking without the preliminary, fundamental sense of a truth and a good to be sought and without a basic trust in the intelligibility of the real and the possibility of its disclosure in the experience that the Greeks termed aletheia or truth, literally the unhiddenness of the real. Faith, love, and hope, therefore, are central ways in which the tension expresses itself and begins to emerge into luminosity, and because the mystery of being can never be reduced to simply the answer to a question, there is no way that reason can ever pass beyond them. Both before and after the development of noesis, faith, love, and hope are and remain man's most fundamental relation to mystery. Quote OH 4:329 Heb 11.1

W 70 f. Various ways of expressing participation: Beyond, epekeina, ipsum esse, hyperouranion; participation means (a) being one of many (b) approximation or resemblance in some respect to the supreme.

W 58: Nominalist style of language and the world view it implies is... "flattened out or emptied of its inward, existential content and its vertical dimension of transcendence.."

The breakthrough to a larger view will require.. "experiential reactivation and linguistic renewal" (OH 4:56)

W 61 f. Only in the mirror of language do /62/ we ever really know ourselves, and then only in the manner that Voegelin frequently refers to as cognitio fidei, namely in the manner of faith, through trust in the language that opens up the heights and depths of existence through analogies.

W 62: Still it is luminous mystery. It becomes conscious in the process of questioning as the force and structure of the question itself. This is to say that human existence can become conscious of itself as a state of tension in which there is a reaching toward understanding and correlatively toward a range of closely related goals.

To seek understanding in the proper sense of the word is to seek understanding of the real, which means that it is reaching toward being and toward truth. And that these are sought implies that they are apprehended, at least inchoatively, as good. In its essential /63/ character, the seeking itself is unrestricted.

BL: The a priori's of consciousness constitute it as tension towards the given the intelligible the true the real the good Love.

"Existence" is the subject as consciously striving to attend, understand, reflect, deliberate, be loved and love.

W 63: To seek true understanding is to seek understanding that is comprehensive. It is possible that something less than comprehensive understanding may be sought, but in such a case the quest is not for true understanding. This means, as Voegelin analyzes the matter, that the existential tension from which the quest proceeds has not realized its essential character, has not yet become fully self-luminous, or else that the seeker has chosen to close his attention to some aspect of reality,

perhaps because it would threaten him with an unpleasant truth.

Closed or open, opaque to itself or transparent, the tension of existence remains, according to Voegelin, as the core of humanity. Because this tension is the ontological ground of longing or striving, and because longing and striving imply by their very nature a directional tendency, the human existence characterized by this tension has an essential structure defined by the directional tendency and its goal or goals. When the tension of inquiry is consciously unrestricted, it becomes clear that the goals it seeks not only correlate but also coalesce; to seek unrestricted understanding is to seek the immediate enjoyment of all of being in a perfect luminosity that would constitute a fullness of truth. This is not to say that any human being could attain this goal. Voegelin is endlessly insistent on the limitedness of man. It is the desire not the attainment that is unrestricted.

.. Since the ancient traditional symbol for such superhuman comprehensiveness of being and knowledge is "God" or "the gods," Voegelin has termed the fundamental tension of human existence a "tension toward the divine ground." He uses the term "ground" because when the reaching is experienced as unrestricted, its goal is apprehended as one -- an undefinable unity upon which all the lines of striving converge. "Divine" is used because the goal of unrestricted striving is absolute perfection in any order: the goad of an unrestricted desire to know is perfect knowledge, that of an unrestricted desire for the real is perfect being, and so on.

W 75: The poles of the tension of existence, as Voegelin discusses them, are not "things." They are no more than reference points that define a line of direction, the directional tendency of the tension as such, and the symbols that represent them function in an ~~an~~ indexical manner:..

BL The a priori of seeking is not a category but a transcendental.

W 141: One (the modern mind) tends to say that a given entity must either exist or not exist and that if it does, it exists completely. As was previously explained, "existence" when used in such a context serves as a kind of logical counter, a true-false switch, that applies either wholly or not at all. From the point of view of the participationist way of thinking

a different use of the language of existence is called for: existence does not have th^{is} simple factual meaning at all but has fluctuating meanings as it represents different levels between perfect being and nothingness. As Voegelin stated the issue in "The Gospel and Culture" (p. 65):

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Well, existence is not a fact. If anything, existence is the non-fact of a disturbing movement in the In-Between of ignorance and knowledge, of time and timelessness, of imperfection and perfection, of hope and fulfillment, and ultimately of life and death. From the experience of this movement, from the anxiety of the right direction in this In-Between of darkness and light, arises the enquiry concerning the meaning of life. But it does arise... because life is experienced as man's participation in a movement with a direction to be found or missed; if man's existence were not a movement but a fact it not only would have no meaning but the question of meaning could not arise.